SHARON KELLY HEYOB

THE CULT OF ISIS AMONG WOMEN IN THE GRAECO-ROMAN WORLD

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ÉTUDES PRÉLIMINAIRES AUX RELIGIONS ORIENTALES DANS L'EMPIRE ROMAIN

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M. J. VERMASEREN

CINQUANTE-ET-UNIÈME

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PREFACE

In recent years a good deal of scholarly interest has been aroused on the subject of the oriental religions as they developed outside of Egypt in the Greek and Roman spheres. New archaeological finds have contributed to this interest and in some cases have allowed new interpretations of past thinking. The object of this work is to investigate the role of women in one of the most widespread of these oriental cults, the cult of Isis. My initial curiosity about this subject grew out of the remarks of the elegiac poets about their mistresses' involvement with Isis. Of primary interest to me is the degree to which women participated in the organizational aspects of the cult. This work seeks to investigate in what light women viewed Isis and what aspects of her character appealed most to them. Finally, a study of the morality of the cult was made in view of the implications of the elegiac poets in this regard.

My study was aided considerably by Ladislaus Vidman's recent collection of all of the inscriptions pertaining to the cult into one volume, *Sylloge inscriptionum religionis Isiacae et Sarapiacae.* His precise and thorough commentaries on these inscriptions have been invaluable to me as is evident at every point in this work. Likewise, the works of M. Malaise (*Les conditions de pénétration et de diffusion des cultes égyptiens en Italie* and *Inventaire préliminaire des documents égyptiens découverts en Italie*) and of F. Dunand (*Le culte d'Isis dans le bassin oriental de la méditerranée*) have proved to be extremely helpful to me throughout this publication. J. Gwyn Griffiths' recent edition of Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride* with its English translation and very thorough commentary is also an extremely valuable piece of recent scholarship in this field, as are all of the works pertaining to the oriental cults continually being produced in this series (*Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'empire romain*) edited by M. J. Vermaseren.

I wish here to express my gratitude to Rev. Thomas P. Halton of The Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., for introducing me to Isis, for guiding me patiently during the preparation of this work in its original form as a doctoral dissertation, and for obtaining for me copies of a number of important bibliographical items. I am greatly

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ABBREVIATIONS

AC	*L'Antiquité classique*
AJA	*American Journal of Archaeology*
AJP	*American Journal of Philology*
BCH	*Bulletin de correspondance hellénique*
BIE	*Bulletin de l'Institut d'Égypte*
CAH	*Cambridge Ancient History*
CIG	*Corpus inscriptionum Graecarum*
CIL	*Corpus inscriptionum Latinarum*
CJ	*Classical Journal*
CP	*Classical Philology*
CR	*Classical Review*
CRAI	*Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres*
CW	*Classical World*
DIO	Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*
HThR	*Harvard Theological Review*
IG	*Inscriptiones Graecae*
IGRR	*Inscriptiones Graecae ad res Romanas pertinentes*
ILS	*Inscriptiones Latinae selectae*
JEA	*Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*
JRS	*Journal of Roman Studies*
JThS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
OGIS	*Orientis Graeci inscriptiones selectae*
P. Oxy. 1380	*The Oxyrhynchus Papyri XI.1380*
PSI	*Papiri Greci e Latini*
RE	Pauly-Wissowa *et al.*, *Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*
REG	*Revue des études grecques*
REL	*Revue des études latines*
RHR	*Revue de l'histoire des religions*
RIC	Mattingly, H., and E. A. Sydenham, *The Roman Imperial Coinage*
SEG	*Supplementum epigraphicum Graecum*
SHA	Scriptores historiae Augustae
SIG	*Sylloge inscriptionum Graecarum*
TAPA	*Transactions of the American Philological Association*
VS	Vidman, L., *Sylloge inscriptionum religionis Isiacae et Sarapiacae*
VS CE	P. Roussel, *Les cultes égyptiens à Délos du III^e^ au I^er^ siècle av. J.-C.*
ZAS	*Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde*

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CHAPTER ONE

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

From time immemorial Isis was for the Egyptian world goddess of all life. The *ankh*, the symbol so often held by her in ancient Egyptian representations, was the very symbol of life. Annually, according to the myth, she restored the life of Osiris, her brother-husband, god of the Nile, who in turn inundated the land, rejuvenating its fertility and providing sustenance for its inhabitants. Little wonder, then, in a land so dependent on the river for its existence, that her creative powers were deemed limitless, that she was identified with every living thing, and that she became all things to all men. Isis was the Great Lady, the Queen of Heaven, the Moon-goddess, protectress and mother of all the pharaohs. Her hieroglyph s.t. or Aset meant throne, a symbol frequently adorning her head in Egyptian portrayals. Originally she may have personified the royal throne.[1] She was the corn goddess, the rain goddess, and the wind goddess. She invented spinning and weaving. She was skilled as a sorceress and a healer. The ordinary Egyptian could turn to her in an infinite number of troubles.

Isis's union with Osiris, too, existed from all time, and it was of the deepest intimacy. Plutarch tells of the sexual union of the two already in their mother's womb before their birth.[2] The doctrine of Heliopolis makes the two, along with Seth, or Typhon as Plutarch calls him, and Nephthys, the children of the earth god Geb and the sky goddess Nut. Typhon's plot against Osiris, Isis's wanderings in search of her husband, her discovery of him, and the birth of Horus from the seed of his dead father are well known from Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride*.[3] In legend Isis showed herself the ideal wife, characterized by her complete love of and devotion to Osiris, and the ideal mother in her relationship with Horus, known in the Graeco-Roman world as Harpocrates; the three formed a model family, the object of Egyptian admiration.

In all of her very human aspects Isis was to touch the hearts of many

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[1] S. A. B. Mercer, *The Religion of Ancient Egypt* (London 1949) 198.

[2] Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride* 12 (356A).

[3] *Ibid.*, 12ff. (355D ff.).

in the post-Alexandrian period and her faith was to spread itself throughout all of Europe and Asia Minor.[4] But first a transformation took place among the three divinities, and it was the resultant Hellenistic goddess who took hold of the Graeco-Roman world. The Greeks who first learned of the cult, refusing to accept any gods who did not correspond to the Greek conceptions of the divine, identified Isis and her new husband Sarapis with their own deities; so these Egyptian gods took on new attributes. Certain aspects of the cult, particularly those concerning animals, found no place in the Greek worship and were discarded, and other typically Greek practices found their way into the cult. Outwardly Isis in various art forms took on a new appearance, but her most basic characteristics and much of the Egyptian ritual were retained.

It has generally been believed until very recently that Ptolemy I Soter, at some point during his reign as king of Egypt (305-283 B.C.), sought a god in whose worship both Egyptians and Egyptian-based Greeks might join together. The legend was that in a dream Ptolemy had a vision of a colossal statue bidding him to bring it to Alexandria immediately; when described, the statue was said by a certain traveler or travelers to be that of Pluto in Sinope.[5] This, says Tacitus, is the most

[4] For the widespread influence of the cult see G. Lafaye, *Histoire du culte des divinités d'Alexandrie* (Paris 1883); T. A. Brady, *The Reception of the Egyptian Cults by the Greeks (330-30 B.C.)* (University of Missouri Studies X; Columbia, Missouri 1935); V. Wessetzky, *Die ägyptischen Kulte zur Römerzeit in Ungarn* (Leiden 1961); M. F. Squarciapino, *I culti orientali ad Ostia* (Leiden 1962); V. Tran Tam Tinh, *Essai sur le culte d'Isis à Pompéi. Images et cultes* (Paris 1964); G. y. Bellido, *Les religions orientales dans l'Espagne romaine* (Leiden 1967); E. and J. R. Harris, *The Oriental Cults in Roman Britain* (Leiden 1965); L. Zotović, *Les cultes orientaux sur le territoire de la Mésie Superieure* (Leiden 1966); G. Grimm, *Die Zeugnisse ägyptischer Religion und Kunstelemente im römischen Deutschland* (Leiden 1969); V. Tran Tam Tinh, *Le culte des divinités orientales à Herculanum* (Leiden 1971); *id.*, *Le culte des divinités orientales en Campanie* (Leiden 1972); M. Malaise, *Inventaire préliminaire des documents égyptiens retrouvés en Italie* (Leiden 1972); *id.*, *Les conditions de pénétration et de diffusion des cultes égyptiens en Italie* (Leiden 1972); F. Dunand, *Le culte d'Isis dans le bassin oriental de la Méditerranée* : I. *Le culte d'Isis et les Ptolémées*; II. *Le culte d'Isis en Grèce*; III. *Le culte d'Isis en Asie Mineure. Le clergé et rituel des sanctuaires isiaques* (Leiden 1972); and the works continually being published in the series *Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'empire romain* edited by M. J. Vermaseren. For a quick view of the spread of the cult see the maps in R. E. Witt, *Isis in the Graeco-Roman World* (London 1971) 56-57.

[5] Plu., *DIO* 28 (361F-362B); Tac., *Hist.* 4.83-84.

popular account of the origin of the god, but others claim he came from Seleucia at the time of Ptolemy III Euergetes,[6] and still others make Memphis his home.[7] The theory, however, that Sarapis[8] was of Egyptian origin, deriving his character and name from Osiris-Apis (Osor-Hapi), the deified bull or series of bulls from Memphis,[9] is now generally accepted.[10] It may be said, then, that if Ptolemy was the founder of the cult, he merely gave official recognition to a cult that already existed and Hellenized its iconography.[11] Realizing that a god represented as a bull would in no way be acceptable to the Greek mind, Ptolemy, as the theory goes, commissioned the famed Athenian sculptor Bryaxis to create a cult statue, the result being a colossal, seated divinity with a majestic bearing, his abundant hair adorned with the *calathos*, symbol of fertility; on the whole, it very much resembled Zeus or Asclepius.[12] The theory that attributes this statue to Bryaxis, however, can not be followed although it is possible that a work of his influenced the Alexan-

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[6] According to Isidore in Clem. Alex., *Protr.* 4.48.2, the statue was brought by the Seleucians near Antioch. Cf. also Tac., *Hist.* 4.84.

[7] Tac., *Hist.* 4.84.

[8] The spelling *S*arapis was already more than two centuries old when *S*erapis, which the Romans preferred, replaced it. (L. Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis bei den Griechen und Römern* [Berlin 1970] 24).

[9] Plu., *DIO* 20 (359B) and 29 (362C) explains Apis as the image of the soul of Osiris. For an explanation of the rites associated with the Apis bull see E. Bevan, *A History of Egypt Under the Ptolemaic Dynasty* (London 1927) 41-42.

[10] For a full explanation of the theory of Memphian origin see Bouché-Leclercq, "La politique réligieuse de Ptolémée Soter et le culte de Sérapis," *RHR* 46 (1902) 1-30 und U. Wilcken, *Urkunden der Ptolemäerzeit* (Berlin and Leipzig 1927) 1.77-88. For a discussion of earlier views see Wilcken, *UPZ* 1.77-88 and I. Levy in his four articles entitled "Sarapis" : *RHR* 60 (1909) 285-98, *RHR* 61 (1910) 162-96, *RHR* 63 (1911) 125-47, *RHR* 67 (1913) 308-17. For attempts to prove that Sarapis originated in Sinope see C. F. Lehmann, "Sarapis contra Oserapis," *Klio* 4 (1904) 396-401 and R. Stiehl, "The Origin of the Cult of Sarapis," *History of Religions* 3 (1963-64) 21-23.

[11] J. Gwyn Griffiths in his edition of Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride* (Univ. of Wales 1970) 394. This edition is hereafter simply referred to as Griffiths.

[12] F. Cumont, *Les religions orientales dans le paganisme romain* (4th ed. Paris 1929) 72; Brady, *Reception* 10 ; P.M. Fraser, "Two Studies on the Cult of Sarapis in the Hellenistic World," *Opuscula Atheniensia* 3 (1960) 3 n. 1. For a detailed discussion of the appearance of this statue and of its creator see W. Hornbostel, *Sarapis* (Leiden 1973), esp. pp. 59-133 and 35-58.

drian Sarapis.[13] An important sanctuary of Sarapis would have to have been built during the lifetime of Bryaxis, a fact which scarcely seems possible given that the sculptor flourished c. 350 B.C.[14] The first cult statue in the most ancient sanctuary was very likely an Egyptian statue; the oldest extant Greek representation of Sarapis belonged to the reign of a successor of Euergetes,[15] probably Ptolemy IV, so it is difficult to place farther back than the reign of Ptolemy III a Hellenistic statue of Sarapis. Perhaps the latter ruler brought back with him from Seleucia a statue sculpted in the style of Bryaxis.[16]

A great deal of controversy surrounds the validity of several aspects of this theory of Ptolemaic origin. Objections to the belief that Ptolemy created Sarapis to unite the Egyptians and the Greeks resident in Egypt were first raised by W. Schubart[17] who asserted that such a unifying policy scarcely corresponded to the political viewpoint of Ptolemy I. Schubart was supported in this belief by his student E. Visser[18] who raised the question of whether the Greek population in Egypt needed a unifying god to bring it into a relationship with the Egyptian religion and who demonstrated that such a relationship already existed. Visser has further demonstrated that the court poets gave very little attention to Sarapis,[19] the opposite of which would be expected if Ptolemy were attempting to promote the god. In a recent study P. M. Fraser[20] gave his attention to this matter and showed that in terms of dedications, papyri, and literary evidence Sarapis had very limited appeal in Ptolemaic Egypt; he was worshiped more in the third century than at any other time, mostly in Alexandria, and mostly by Greeks; Egyptians participated in the cult only insofar as they were Hellenized. The Greeks, concludes Fraser, seem to have been foremost in Ptolemy's mind when he created the god though certainty is impossible without a clearer understanding of the Greek and Egyptian elements of the cult. While

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[13] Dunand, *Le culte d'Isis* 1.58.

[14] I. Lévy, "Sarapis," *RHR* 63 (1911) 138.

[15] This representation appears on a silver coin; cf. Dunand, *Le culte d'Isis* 1.58 n. 2.

[16] *Ibid.*, 1.58.

[17] W. Schubart, *Einführung in die Papyruskunde* (Berlin 1918) 339.

[18] E. Visser, *Götter und Kulte im Ptolemäischen Alexandrien* (Amsterdam 1938) 20.

[19] *Ibid.*, 21.

[20] Fraser, *Opusc. Athen.* 3 (1960) 9-19.

giving his attention to the creation of Sarapis by Ptolemy I, J. Gwyn Griffiths[21] comments that Fraser's conclusions are unobjectionable. In this connection, however, he has raised two questions which deserve further consideration if Fraser's theory is to stand : 1) "why was the choice made from the Egyptian pantheon rather than the Greek?"; 2) "why was the anthropomorphic Osiris or Isis not chosen rather than a god that was partly theriomorphic in origin?" A possible or at least partial answer to these questions lies in the theory that Ptolemy I intended the cult for the Greeks residing in Egypt and for Hellenized Egyptians but not for the native population. His purpose would have been to supply the Greeks, especially those at Alexandria, with the divine protector which they had been lacking. Because of the position of the Greeks in Egypt this protector would require Egyptian elements.[22]

Controversy also surrounds the dating of the introduction of Sarapis to Alexandria. Lack of dated evidence makes it impossible to conclude precisely at what date or in what manner the god's cult was transferred from Memphis to Alexandria. Fraser[23] would link the date to the transfer of the Egyptian capital from Memphis to Alexandria, concluding that the earliest date at which Sarapis could have been introduced to Alexandria was 320 B.C., though there is no direct evidence for this. In an important article written several years ago N. Greipl,[24] while discussing an inscription from Halicarnassus (VS 270=OGIS 16), concluded that it is impossible to place the introduction in Ptolemy's governorship since there is no evidence for it. She would allow the last decade of Ptolemy's reign as a possible date for introduction. Previously the inscription from Halicarnassus was dated between 308 and 306 B.C., which dates were believed to be the latest possible period for the introduction of Sarapis.[25]

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[21] Griffiths 395.

[22] Fraser, *Opusc. Athen.* 3 (1960) 19; Dunand, *Le culte d'Isis* 1.55.

[23] Fraser, *Opusc. Athen.* 3 (1960) 2-3 n. 1.

[24] N. Greipl, "Über eine Ptolemäerinschrift," *Philologus* 39 (1930) 173.

[25] Wilcken, *UPZ* 1.82. See the literary evidence for introduction under the reign Ptolemy I in Tac., *Hist.* 4.83; Plu., *DIO* 28 (361F), *De sollertia animalium* 36 (984A-B); Eustathius, *Ad Dionys. Perieg.* 255. Cf. also Jerome in Eusebius, *Chronica* 2.119 who dates the introduction to 286 B.C., and Cyril of Alexandria, *Contra Julian* 1 and the Armenian version of Eusebius which put the date in 280 B.C. Clement of Alexandria, *Protr.* 4.48.1 ff. makes Ptolemy Philadelphus the recipient of the Sarapis statue from the Sinopeans.

Greipl, however, and Vidman (VS 270) after her, place the inscription in 271/270 B.C. or later and interpret the Ptolemy there mentioned as Ptolemy II Philadelphus. A number of private dedications to Sarapis and Isis at the beginning of the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus indicate that the cult had been introduced to Alexandria before this time.[26] Furthermore, Menander's words ὡς σεμνὸς ὁ Σάραπις θεός[27] imply that the introduction of Sarapis must have been prior to 291 B.C., the date of the author's death.[28]

In a most recent discussion of the dating of the beginnings of Sarapis, however, Vidman has expressed the opinion that the theory that Alexander the Great was familiar with Sarapis must no longer be passed over in silence.[29] In fact, says Vidman, the Alexander tradition in which Sarapis was connected with Alexander survived until the Middle Ages. Speaking of the need for greater attention to the theory that the Sarapis cult originated in the time of Alexander the Great, Vidman mentions the work of F. Pfister (*Alexander der Grosse in den Offenbarungen der Griechen, Juden, Mohammedaner und Christen* [Berlin 1956]) who supported this theory. Following Pfister, C. Bradford Welles in his article, "The Discovery of Sarapis and the Foundation of Alexandria," *Historia* 11 (1962) 271-98, supported the Alexander theory. It remains uncertain, however, whether the theory of Ptolemaic origin or that of origin in the time of Alexander the Great is the correct one. At any rate Sarapis existed already at the end of the fourth century B.C. whether or not his origin is placed in the time of Alexander.[30]

Sarapis quickly became known outside of Egypt. Already at the end of the fourth century B.C. an inscription from Halicarnassus (VS 269) indicates that Sarapis and Isis were worshiped by a couple and their children. This is regarded by Fraser as the oldest mention of the Hellenistic cult outside of Egypt.[31] It is true that an inscription from Athens from 333/32 B.C. (VS 1=IG 2/3².337) mentions a temple of Isis, but she was the pre-Hellenistic Isis as indicated by the fact that only οἱ Αἰγύπτιοι

[26] Fraser, *Opusc. Athen.* 3 (1960) 2 and n. 1.

[27] *P. Oxy.* 1803.9.

[28] Cf. Dunand, *Le culte d'Isis* 1.51 and n. 3.

[29] Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis* 22.

[30] *Ibid.*, 28.

[31] Fraser, *Opusc. Athen.* 3 (1960) 34 n. 1.

were connected with her, as is also the case in a fourth-century inscription from Eretria (VS 73=IG Suppl. 562) which consists only of the words *Αἰγύπτιοι Ἴσιδι.*[32] Also from the fourth century B.C.[33] comes an inscription from Perinthus in Thrace (VS 128) in which a priest is already mentioned.

The third century B.C. witnessed the establishment of the Hellenistic cults along the coasts of insular and continental Greece. Initially, the cult worship was confined to private individuals or associations, but eventually public cults arose. One of the most important cult centers in this early period was Delos whose first Serapeum was built about the year 205 B.C.[34] through the mediation of Apollonius II, grandson of the Egyptian priest who had come from Memphis and brought the cult with him.[35] The most ancient inscription from Delos concerning the Egyptian gods is one dedicated to Isis (VS CE=IG 11.4.1306) dating back to the end of the fourth or the beginning of the third century B.C.[36] After Delos lost its independence to Athens, the Delian cult became official. Athens in turn was influenced to some degree by the thriving cult at Delos.[37] While the cult had already been known in Athens for some time as an inscription (VS 2=IG $2/3^2$.1292) mentioning an association of *Sarapiastai* and dating from 215/14 B.C. indicates, the cult was not officially recognized there until just after 200 B.C. as is shown by an inscription (VS 3=IG $2/3^2$.4692) in which the priest and the zacorus mentioned were Athenian citizens.[38]

A glance at the inscriptions will show that the cult spread widely

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[32] Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis* 34.

[33] Fraser, *Opusc. Athen.* 3 (1960) 37 n. 6.

[34] Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis* 37.

[35] P. Roussel, *Les cultes égyptiens à Délos du III*e *au I*er *siècle av. J.-C.* (Nancy 1916) 72. For a brief but well-organized listing of the sources for the evidence from Delos see Ph. Bruneau, *Recherches sur les cultes de Délos à l'époque hellénistique et à l'époque impériale* (Paris 1970) 457-59.

[36] This dating is according to M. Malaise, *Les conditions de pénétration et de diffusion des cultes égyptiens en Italie* (Leiden 1972) 276.

[37] The name of Ἰσιγένης was held by an Athenian who was born at the end of the fifth or beginning of the fourth century B.C. (IG 2^2.1727) The appearance of a theophoric name so early is significant; it is probable that in this family the cult of Isis was practiced though it was not yet official at Athens. Dunand, *Le culte d'Isis* 2.5-6.

[38] Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis* 37.

in the second and first centuries B.C. to numerous Greek cities in, for example, Boeotia, Phocis, the Peloponnesus, Euboea, Epirus, Thessaly, Thrace, and Macedonia, to Rhodes and the islands of the Aegean and to the cities of Asia Minor.[39] The widespread popularity of the cult led to the theory maintained until very recently that the spread of the cult of Isis and Sarapis outside of Egypt was due to its deliberate promotion for political reasons by the Ptolemies. In his work on the Egyptian cults at Delos P. Roussel first gave indications that this theory certainly did not apply at Delos where official documents showed that an ordinary priest with no political intentions simply brought the cult with him from Memphis to Delos. Roussel could not find any proof that the Ptolemies favored the propagation of the cult of Sarapis and Isis at Delos.[40] Fraser took up this idea and applied it to several other cities in which the cult was popular at an early period. He has successfully shown that the theory of Ptolemaic propagation must be abandoned for, according to him :

> Not only is the cult of Sarapis practiced as a public cult almost exclusively, so far as our present knowledge goes, in cities which were never Ptolemaic, such as Rhodes and Priene, and even in the capitals and main cities of monarchs continually hostile to Egypt, such as Thessalonica and Laodicea, but it is conspicuously absent from the main Ptolemaic preserves. Against this it is useless to set the evidence of the new places which had the cult (usually in private form, so far as we can tell), and also happen to have been Ptolemaic. The theory of Ptolemaic inspiration must be abandoned in its entirety. The cult spread spontaneously unaffected by political factors.[41]

The cult of Sarapis and the associated deities spread spontaneously by means of merchants, Greeks who had served in Egyptian military or

[39] For a complete and systematic discussion of the appearance of Sarapis and Isis in Greece see Brady, *Reception*, and W. Drexler, "Isis," in W. H. Roscher, *Ausführliches Lexikon der Griechischen und Römischen Mythologie* (Leipzig 1882-1921) 2.373-95. See also the summary treatment in Tran Tam Tinh, *Essai* 15-19.

[40] Roussel, *Les cultes égyptiens* 244 : "La domination des Lagides paraît donc avoir duré une quarantaine d'années environ. Or, on chercherait en vain la preuve que, durant ce laps de temps, ils aient en quelque mesure favorisé la propagation du culte de Sarapis et d'Isis à Délos." Bruneau, *Recherches sur les cultes de Délos* 466, likewise believes that the introduction of the Egyptian cults in Delos was not due to Lagid influence.

[41] Fraser, *Opusc. Athen.* 3 (1960) 47.

civilian capacities,[42] travelers, sailors, and priests. It is not altogether clear to what extent the cult spread directly from Egypt and to what extent Greek cities that received the cults early acted as intermediaries,[43] but in view of the rejection of the theory of Ptolemaic promotion it would seem likely that the older foundations of the cult played an important part in the spread of the cult. Certain cities which were great trading centers are likely to have been influential in this spread[44] as seems most evident in the reception of the cults by Italy.

According to the most common thesis it was at Alexandria that the Hellenistic Isis was born, and the iconography she received was entirely new.[45] Whether or not it was intended that Isis should be connected with this new god Sarapis in much the same way as she was with Osiris is not absolutely clear. She became very quickly associated with Sarapis as the inscriptions reveal; the majority of the dedications of this period are made to both Sarapis and Isis together.[46] There is no certain evidence that any of the Ptolemies dedicated a temple to both Sarapis and Isis in Egypt,[47] so official initiative here is not directly evident. The association of Isis with Sarapis could be a most natural and spontaneous one in the light of Sarapis's creation from Osiris-Apis. Spontaneous or otherwise, the association of the two was made, at least to some degree. For the Egyptians continued to worship Isis as the old Egyptian divinity while to the Greek population she was the wife of Sarapis,[48] represented under a new cult type. Here again there is a lack of clarity about her development in this period; little is known of the nature of the Egyptian and Greek elements involved in her cult. It is certain, however, that the

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[42] Brady, *Reception* 17.

[43] *Ibid.*, 31 where Brady says, "In almost all instances, the further extension of the worship of Sarapis after the reign of Euergetes I came by way of the older foundations in the Greek world and not from Egypt." In evaluating this statement it is necessary to keep in mind that Brady advocated the theory of Ptolemaic interest in racial union and of Ptolemaic promotion outside of Egypt and feels that by this time such Ptolemaic interest had died.

[44] *Ibid.*, 32 where Brady mentions as possible intermediate centers Eretria, Boeotia, and Methana. Fraser, *Opusc. Athen.* 3 (1960) 49 suggests Rhodes and Delos.

[45] Dunand, *Le culte d'Isis* 1.80.

[46] Fraser, *Opusc. Athen.* 3 (1960) 4.

[47] *Ibid.*

[48] Brady, *Reception* 17; Dunand,, *Le culte d'Isis* 1.79.

two divinities became inseparable in the Graeco-Roman world; mention of one implied the other.[49]

By the second century B.C. the Romans already knew of the Egyptian cults. As to precisely how or at what date the cults first entered Italy nothing is certain, but contact between Italians and those who were familiar with the cults occurred in several instances. The climate for learning of Sarapis and Isis was particularly good at Delos where the cult in the second century B.C. was a thriving one. As early as the first half of the second century B.C. Italian *negotiatores* were settled at Delos.[50] Since the Greek termed any Italian Ῥωμαῖος whether he was a slave, a freedman, or an actual citizen of Rome, it is impossible to know the exact origin of all of the Italians at Delos although many have been shown to have come from southern Italy.[51] Dedications of Italians at Delos to the Egyptian gods appeared most frequently toward the end of the second century B.C., but some were set up at the beginning of the second century.[52] Roussel notes that after 166 B.C. there was among the *Isiaci* at Delos a large number of Italians : ten are found among the inventories, fifteen or sixteen in the dedications, and seventy are listed as subscribers.[53] From 166 to 88 B.C. there appeared at Delos the names of one hundred fifteen Italians who adhered to the Isiac religion.[54] It is entirely possible that these Italians returned home and

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[49] At Delos, for example, Sarapis was always worshiped most preponderantly, but Isis was of nearly equal importance. She was called the spouse of Sarapis. She had her own temple in the official sanctuary and was often invoked alone in dedications. Cf. Bruneau, *Recherches sur les cultes de Délos* 463 and also J. Marcadé, *Au Musée de Délos* (Paris 1969) 428.

[50] J. Hatzfeld, "Les Italiens à Délos," *BCH* 36 (1912) 5, 141-142; *id.*, *Les trafiquants italiens dans Orient hellénistique* (Paris 1919) 34-36.

[51] Hatzfeld, *BCH* 36 (1912) 130-34. Tran Tam Tinh, *Essai* 20, however, cites Hatzfeld as a source for the statement that in the first half of the second century B.C. many Roman *negotiatores* were settled at Delos.

[52] The names of the Italian dedicants at Delos can be found in Hatzfeld's article in *BCH* 36 (1912) 197-218 and in Brady, *Reception* 69, with some further additions made by Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis* 96-97. See also Malaise, *Les conditions de pénétration* 283-303 where he gives a prosopographia of Italians attested in the Egyptian cults at Delos. He lists one as early as the end of the third/beginning of the second century B.C., one 158/7 B.C., and one before 156 B.C.

[53] Roussel, *Les cultes égyptiens* 283-84.

[54] Malaise, *Les conditions de pénétration* 331.

introduced their newly discovered religion to their fellow citizens. It is more likely that exposure to the cults in Delos rather than at Alexandria was responsible for their introduction to Italy. Although Italian *negotiatores* resided in or had passing contact with Alexandria, the cult of Sarapis, as been said, did not flourish there.

The proximity of Italy to Sicily made it possible that Italians could come into contact with the Egyptian cults. The new cult was introduced to Sicily shortly after 214 B.C.[55] The old theory that Agathocles, the tyrant of Syracuse, and his wife Theoxena, the daughter of Ptolemy II, brought the cult to Sicily about 300 B.C. has now been rejected since it was based on an incorrect reference and also on the imperialistic theory.[56] Coins from Catana (now Catania) with representations of Isis and Sarapis appeared at the end of the third and the beginning of the second century B.C.[57] Bronze coins from Syracuse having the same representations were minted shortly after 212 B.C.[58] Corresponding chronologically to the appearance of these coins is an inscription on an altar originating perhaps as early as the end of the third century B.C. in Tauromenium (VS 513=IG 14.433) in which Sarapis and Isis (called Hestia) are mentioned. The significance of Sicily as a trade route could have brought many Italians into contact with the Egyptian cults, although the limited number of Isiac documents from Sicily shows that it did not play a large role in the diffusion of the cults in Italy. In addition, Italians could have learned of the cults in other cult centers which Italian merchants frequented. In the Republican period Ῥωμαῖοι also appeared in such cult centers as Eretria and Chalcis,[59] and Italians could have come into contact with the Egyptian cults at Athens, Boeotia, Euboea, Thessaly, and Macedonia.[60] Despite all of this opportunity for

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[55] G. Manganaro, "Ricerche di antichità e di epigrafia siceliote," *Archeologica classica* 17 (1965) 191.

[56] Fraser, *Opusc. Athen.* 3 (1960) 47 n. 3; G. Manganaro, "Ricerche di epigrafia siceliota," *Siculorum Gymnasium* 14 (1961) 175-98; *id.*, *Archaeologica classica* 17 (1965) 189-91; Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis* 29-31.

[57] M. S. Salem, "Ennius and the 'Isiaci Coniectores'," *JRS* 28 (1938) 58 and n. 13.

[58] Manganaro, *Archaeologica classica* 17 (1965) 190-91.

[59] Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis* 98-99 and nn. 17 and 18.

[60] Malaise, *Les conditions de pénétration* 265.

contact with the cults, there are relatively few traces of actual participation in these cults by Italians.[61]

Italians were also exposed to the Egyptian cults on their own soil by means of a steady stream of Egyptian merchants and sailors who played an increasingly important part in the commerce of the Mediterranean. A particularly interesting note in this regard is the observation by Vidman that no standard publication concerning the Isis cult refers to the fact that the oldest witness of the cult in Spain occurred as early as 79 B.C.[62] It is a question of an altar found in the camp of Caecilius Metellus on which appears the bust of the bearded Sarapis. This altar was of Alexandrian origin and was brought into the camp by oriental merchants.

The earliest evidence for the cults in Italy is the well-known city ordinance from Puteoli dating to the year 105 B.C. (VS 497 = CIL 10.1781) which provided for the construction of a wall in the area in front of the temple of Sarapis.[63] Analogies show that there normally was a considerable duration of time between the first appearance of a religion and its definite establishment,[64] which in this case is proved by the presence of a temple to Sarapis. It seems probable that there also was at Puteoli a temple of Isis.[65] During the first and second centuries B.C. the role of the Aegean as the leading market for Hellenistic goods had diminished and that of Italy and the West increased. Since the beginning of the second century B.C. when she had received a Roman colony, Puteoli increasingly became the chief commercial port of southern Italy at the

[61] *Ibid.*, 267 where Malaise points to only three such Greek inscriptions : VS 48=IG 7.540, from Tanagra in Boeotia, 97-95 B.C.; VS 111a from Thessalonica in Macedonia, first century B.C., VS 111b from Thessalonica, first century B.C.

[62] *Ibid.*, 100 and n. 22.

[63] Only two other inscriptions, both of them dedications to Sarapis, have been found in Puteoli. They are both of a much later date, one (VS 498=CIL 10.1593) dated merely after Trajan, the other (VS 499=CIL 10.1594) dating from the end of the second or beginning of the third century A.D. For a boat-shaped lamp with a likeness of Isis crowning Sarapis see Witt, *Isis* pl. 40.

[64] Ch.-A. Dubois, "Cultes et dieux à Pouzzoles," *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire* 22 (1902) 44.

[65] See. V. Tran Tam Tinh, *Le culte des divinités orientales en Campanie* (Leiden 1972) 23-24 where he speaks of two vases, one from Prague, the other from Odemeira, that indicate by inscription and depiction respectively the existence of an Iseum at Puteoli.

expense of Neapolis.[66] In this position Puteoli was open to the reception of the Egyptian cults from many places. Among the many Campanians who paid hommage to Sarapis, Isis, and Anubis in Delos, the Puteolians figured in the first place.[67]

The passage from Valerius Maximus (9.14.3) where Valerius relates that the name "Serapio" was given by the *vulgus* to the young Cornelius Scipio who became consul in 138 B.C., because of his resemblance to a slave who had this cognomen[68] is sometimes used as an indication that the cult was known in Italy in the first half of the second century B.C. However, this does not necessarily mean that the cult had already been introduced among the lower classes, but might simply be a question of a Greco-oriental slave.[69]

In a passage from Cicero, *De divinatione* 1.58, the following words are attributed to Ennius :

> non habeo denique nauci Marsum augurem;
> non vicanos haruspices, non de circo astrologos;
> non Isiacos coniectores, non interpretes somnium;

In an article discussing this passage M. S. Salem[70] explains that early editors of the *De divinatione* used to attribute this passage to Ennius, but since the time of F. H. Bothe (*Poetae scenici Latinorum* [Halberstadt 1823]) this view has been opposed. While Salem admits that it is impossible to call these the *ipsissima verba* of Ennius, he attempts to show that they can be a close paraphrase of his words. Most important, Salem has emphasized that those who reject the Ennian origin of the words simply on the grounds of chronological impossibility are incorrect since it is entirely possible that Ennius was familiar with the cult of Isis. While discussing the use of the term *Isiaci*, Vidman says that it appears to him very doubtful that Ennius could have used this expression since this passage is the oldest proof for the use of the adjective *Isiacus*, although he acknowledges the Isis cult was familiar to Ennius.[71] While,

[66] R. M. Peterson, *The Cults of Campania* (Rome 1919) 101.

[67] Tran Tam Tinh, *Campanie* 25.

[68] G. Lafaye, "L'introduction du culte de Sérapis à Rome," *RHR* 11 (1885) 327-29.

[69] Malaise, *Les conditions de pénétration* 255 n. 3.

[70] Salem, *JRS* 28 (1938) 56-59.

[71] Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis* 92. Malaise, *Les conditions de pénétration* 247, believes that the Isiac cult only began to win Campania at this period and appeared at Rome only at the beginning of the first century B.C.

in the opinion of this writer, it is not quite so doubtful that Ennius could have used these words, this passage certainly cannot be used as concrete proof of any sort for the chronology of the cult in Italy, nor need it be since proof of the early existence of the cult especially in Sicily and Delos makes it very possible that Rome had already been exposed to the cults at the time of Ennius's entrance into Rome.

The spread of the Egyptian cults was rapid and met with little opposition in Campania.[72] In addition to Puteoli they spread to Pompeii, Herculaneum, Naples,[73] and Stabiae.[74] Malaise recently has made a particularly revealing analysis of the Isiac sites in Italy.[75] Nearly all the sites are of an urban character. The south of Italy which witnessed a transfer of the population from the towns to the country showed little predilection for the gods of Egypt. Those places favorable to the cults were frequently on a shore, and many were important ports. Those at the interior were situated on branches of trade routes or not far distant. Such places having a commercial inclination were more open to Greco-oriental influence. It is evident, then, that the Egyptian gods definitely followed the *negotiatores.*

The rich finds in Pompeii reveal that Isis and Sarapis flourished there at the time of the eruption of Vesuvius.[76] But the road to Rome was a rougher one. From an early time the Roman government exercised control over groups which associated for religious reasons.[77] Many of the foreign cults that made their way to Rome at the beginning of the second century B.C. were well suited for the gathering of subversives from the lower classes of Roman society. Such religions appealed greatly to the masses to whom the official Roman religion was dry and meaningless. The pomp of their festivities and the awesomeness of their mysticism were a welcome substitute for the perfunctory contractual

[72] Tran Tam Tinh, *Campanie* 34, notes that it is interesting that in Campania much more than elsewhere, Isis took on all of her forms, being endowed with the most diverse attributes to please the faithful.

[73] There was perhaps a temple of the Egyptian gods at Naples at the end of the second century B.C. Tran Tam Tinh, *Campanie* 29.

[74] Tran Tam Tinh, *Essai* 26.

[75] Malaise, *Les conditions de pénétration* 348.

[76] See Tran Tam Tinh, *Essai* for the archaeological finds at Pompeii.

[77] A. Alföldi, "Isiskult und Umsturzbewegung im letzten Jahrhundert der Römischen Republik," *Schweizer Münzblätter* 5 (1954) 26.

tone of the state religion. Moreover, the mystery religions gave the illusion of intellectual certainty and offered the reward of a future life in return for piety.[78] The associations of *Isiaci* which arose among the lower classes could, if not carefully guarded by the authorities, exercise strong political power. Enemy activity concealed under the aura of religion was rooted out with force. There is no better example than the action taken by the Senate in 186 B.C. against the devotees of Bacchus as a result of the passage of the *Senatus consultum de Bacchanalibus*. The social upheaval of the first century B.C. found a gathering place for its dissatisfied elements in the secret associations of worshipers of the Alexandrine gods. In a numismatic study, A. Alföldi[79] has asserted that at least one such association housed on the Capitoline Hill managed to express its revolutionary tendencies on coins. Already in the 80's B.C. the coin issues portrayed references to the exotic surroundings of Isis and her associated symbols without depicting the goddess or her companion gods themselves.[80] A series of such coins, with symbols of a scorpion,[81] a lotus flower,[82] a crocodile,[83] an ibis,[84] a pyramid,[85] and a sistrum,[86] used as propaganda, appeared for a period of a decade. After 70 B.C. Isis herself appeared with a sacred bird,[87] and the sistrum and the lotus flower were represented together.[88] The symbolism on these coins seems, according to Alföldi, to have originated not from the *triumviri monetales* but from the lower-ranking staff in the work rooms

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[78] Cumont, *Les religions orientales* 24-35.

[79] Alföldi, *Schweizer Münzblätter* 5 (1954) 28-30.

[80] *Ibid.*

[81] E. Babelon, *Description historique et chronologique des Monnaies de la république romaine* (Paris 1885-86) 1, p. 293, #266, #241; 2, p. 7, #140; p. 566; H. A. Grueber, *Coins of the Roman Republic in the British Museum* (London 1910) 1, #2588, #2602.

[82] Babelon, *Description* 1, p. 294, #230; 2, p. 7, #95; Grueber, *Coins* 1, #2531.

[83] Babelon, *Description* 2, p. 7, #102; Grueber, *Coins* 1, #2569.

[84] Babelon, *Description* 1, p. 293, #166; Grueber, *Coins* 1, #2056.

[85] Grueber, *Coins* 1, #2007, p. 252.

[86] A. Fabretti, *Raccolta numismatica del R. Museo di Antichità di Torino, Mon. Consulari* (Rome/Turin 1876) p. 152, #2815.

[87] Babelon, *Description* 2, p. 403, #23, #123.

[88] Babelon, *Description* 2, p. 403, #140; Grueber, *Coins* 1, #3449. For other similar coin-types see Tran Tam Tinh, *Essai* 20-21.

located under the temple of Juno Moneta.[89] In this connection the college of *Pastophores*, founded in the time of Sulla[90] and evidently associated with a sanctuary on the Capitoline,[91] provided the manpower and the inspiration in conjunction with assistance from some important political functionaries or merchants who had formed attachments to the cults in the midst of business ventures. At least one such person is known — the curule aedile M. Plaetorius Cestianus, an associate of Crassus, who, says Alföldi, issued for the games of Magna Mater in 55 B.C. two coin-types, one with the bust of Isis Panthea.[92] This propaganda was connected with Crassus's attempt to exploit the situation through the agency of the aedile.[93] Something of a discrepancy, however, surrounds the dating of this coin with the image of Isis Panthea. Plaetorius Cestianus minted coins under the authority granted to him by the Senate as curule aedile, an office which he filled in 68 or 67 B.C. Lafaye believed it was impossible that as early as 68 B.C. a state coin could be minted with the image of Isis and suggested that it recalled a diplomatic mission of Plaetorius to Egypt.[94] Vidman in a recent discussion of this problem considers the dating of the coin in 55 B.C. questionable.[95] Indeed, it is difficult to understand how such a coin could be struck in the very midst of the persecutions of Isis followers and the destruction of Isiac altars that were so frequent in that period of the history of the religion. Alföldi in his study gave no reasons for suggesting that Plaetorius Cestia-

[89] Likewise, Alföldi treats the art of the period of the Gracchi. See Alföldi, "Die alexandrinischen Götter und die vota publica am Jahresbeginn," *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 8-9 (1965-66) 53-87. On page 62 of that article he states that from 64 B.C. symbols on wall paintings could no longer be considered mere proofs of the mystery religiosity of the period. They had now become characteristics of the revolution. Here, Alföldi reiterates his belief that Isiac cult associations served as a base for revolutionary organizations, suggesting that they were a serious danger in Rome.

[90] Apul., *Met.* 11.30.

[91] VS 377=CIL 6.2247 mentions a priest of Isis Capitolina. A. Degrassi, *Inscriptiones Latinae liberae rei publicae* (Firenze 1957) 1.159 dates this inscription before 58 B.C. and Vidman accepts this date.

[92] Alföldi, *Schweizer Münzblätter* 5 (1954) 30; P. Tschudin, *Isis in Rom* (Aarau 1962) 16; E. A. Sydenham, *The Coinage of the Roman Republic* (London 1952) #809. Sydenham describes the coin-type as representing Vacuna and dates it 68-66B.C.

[93] Tschudin, *Isis* 16.

[94] Lafaye, *Histoire du culte* 240-41.

[95] Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis* 101-104.

nus minted the coin with the image of Isis Panthea in 55 B.C. rather than at the time when he was believed to have been curule aedile. Vidman explains, however, that in another connection Alföldi did attempt to prove according to stylistic grounds, minting technique, and peculiarity of stamp cut that Plaetorius issued two mints, one without the inscription AED. CVR. which Alföldi places in 62 B.C. and one with the inscription AED. CVR. which he dates in 55 B.C. [96] While Vidman asserts that only a numismatist can corroborate Alföldi's methods (he notes that M. H. Crawford, *Roman Republican Coin Hoards* [London 1969] 2-3, expresses certain hesitations about these methods), he himself believes that the coin was struck before 64 B.C. Furthermore, as to the reasons for the minting of such coins, Vidman draws a parallel to the appearance of the so-called Isis propaganda of the Senate in the fourth century A.D. Alföldi explained the appearance of Isiac symbols on these coins as a reaction of the pagan aristocracy against Christianity and the Christian emperors, and he connected the issuance of these coins with the *vota publica* of the new year on behalf of the emperor.[97] Vidman rejects the notion of pagan propaganda by the Senate, however, and accepts the little-known thesis expounded by S. Mazzarino, "La propaganda imperiale nel tardo impero (1939-1951)," *Doxa* 4 (1951) 121-48, that the minting by the Senate of coins with Isiac symbols was merely an attempt to appease the tastes of the Roman lower classes. Applying this theory to the situation in the first century B.C., Vidman suggests that the curule aedile used these symbols on coins to please the people.[98] This, in fact, would not be the only time during the first century B.C. that politicians

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[96] A. Alföldi, *Schweizerische numismatische Rundschau* 36 (1954) 5-30.

[97] A. Alföldi, *A Festival of Isis in Rome Under the Christian Emperors of the IVth Century* (Budapest 1937). For a discussion and rejection of Alföldi's theory that coins were distributed as New Year's gifts for the purpose of pagan propaganda by the pagan aristocracy in Rome see J. M. C. Toynbee's review of Alföldi's, *Die Kontorniaten : ein verkanntes Propagandamittel der stadtrömischen heidnischen Aristokratie in ihrem Kampfe gegen das christliche Kaisertum* (Budapest 1943) in *JRS* 35 (1945) 115-21. Alföldi refutes his critics in *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 8-9 (1965-66) 53-87. See another review of Alföldi's *Die Kontorniaten* by A. Piganiol, "La propaganda paienne à Rome sous le bas-empire," *Journal des Savants* (1945) 19-28.

[98] Malaise, *Les conditions de pénétration* 371, suggests that these symbols were chosen without thought, perhaps simply because these artisans were of Alexandrine origin.

seeking the favor of the common people made concessions to the lower-class adherents of the Isiac religion.

From their first appearances until this time the Alexandrine cults had been granted the toleration usually given to foreign religions. But in 64 B.C. all collegiate associations in Rome were abolished because their involvement in political actions was suspect. Persecutions of the cult of Isis in particular followed in the years 59,[99] 58,[100] 53,[101] 50,[102] and 48 B.C.[103] The history of these persecutions reveals throughout the persistence of the Isis worshipers of the lower classes. On the first day of his consulship in 58 B.C. Gabinius stood before a crowd that awaited his decision on the status of the altars to Sarapis and Isis.[104] To the disappointment of the crowd he prohibited such altars, deeming the opinion of the Senate, which had already decreed against them, higher than the *impetus vulgi*. Whether the decree of 54 B.C., forbidding the practices of the cult in Rome and calling for the destruction of the private sanctuaries of Isis and Sarapis was carried out is uncertain, but it is possible that the pressure of the *Isiaci*, who had joined the bands of Clodius, prevented it.[105] Again in 30 B.C the impudent resistance of the multitude stood out.[106] When, in accordance with a decree of the Senate, the temples of Isis and Sarapis were to be destroyed, no workman could be found who dared strike a blow against the temples. The consul himself, L. Aemilius Paulus, had to take up the ax.[107] These incidents and

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[99] Cic., *Att.* 2.17.2 : J. Ziehen, "Ein Ciceronianum zur Geschichte des Isiscultes in Rom," *Hermes* 33 (1898) 341-42; O. Seeck, "Zur Geschichte des Isiskultes in Rom," *Hermes* 43 (1908) 642-43; K. Latte, *Römische Religionsgeschichte* (Munich 1960) 282 n. 3. Text of Cic., *Att.* 2.17.2 as handed down :

iacet enim ille sic ut Phocis Curiana stare videatur.

Ziehen's conjecture :

ut prae hoc Isis Curiana stare videatur.

[100] Tert., *Apol.* 6.8; *Nat.* 1.10.17-18; Arnob., *Nat.* 2.73.

[101] Dio Cass. 40.47.3-4.

[102] Val. Max. 1.3.3.

[103] Dio Cass. 42.26.1-2.

[104] Tert., *Nat.* 1.10.17-18.

[105] Tschudin, *Isis* 16.

[106] Val. Max. 1.3.3.

[107] This was the consul of 50 B.C. rather than the earlier one; Lafaye, *Histoire du culte* 42-43, 45; Tran Tam Tinh, *Essai* 22; Witt, *Isis* 223. Tschudin, *Isis* 16 thinks it unlikely that this destruction was completed.

the repeated building of sanctuaries and altars during this period reveal a close connection with the political situation of the times. By 56 B.C. collegiate associations, which had been permitted to exist by the *lex Clodia de collegiis* of 58 B.C., were again dissolved by the Senate. Julius Caesar struck the final blow against the freedom of association when, because of the destructive gangs of 48 and 47 B.C., he dissolved all guilds except those of ancient foundation.[108] Measures of repression against Isis and her followers coincided with laws against all types of guilds which came to be regarded more and more as disturbers of the civic peace. When Christian apologists such as Tertullian and Arnobius,[109] pointed to such magistrates as Gabinius as opponents of idle superstition, they were assigning to them a purpose other than was actually theirs. For it was mainly political motivation that caused the state at this time to suppress these cults.[110]

In 43 B.C. the second triumvirate decreed the construction of a temple to Isis and Sarapis in Rome.[111] Such a decision is in marked contrast not only to the persecution of the cult in the two previous decades but also to the severity of Augustus towards the Egyptian cults some years later as emperor.[112] Ostensibly, the political situation of the times demanded such a move on the part of the triumvirs, particularly Octavian, who sought to appeal to the *populares* in his struggle against Antony.[113] Literary evidence, as has been seen, proves the great public clamor for recognition of Isis and Sarapis. Possibly the triumvirate also sought to appease Cleopatra whose active aid against Caesar's murderers was desirable.[114] There is no evidence, however, that this temple was

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[108] Suet., *Caes.* 42.3.

[109] Cf. n. 100.

[110] J.-P. Waltzing, *Étude historique sur les corporations professionnelles chez les romains* (Louvain 1895) 1.110 and n. 4; Alföldi, *Schweizer Münzblätter* 5 (1954) 31.

[111] Dio Cass. 47.15.4.

[112] For the evolution of Augustus's religious thought in regard to the Egyptian cult see P. Lambrechts, *Augustus en de Egyptische Godsdienst* (Brussels 1956).

[113] On the subject of the relationship of the Egyptian religion to this struggle see I. Becher, "Oktavians Kampf gegen Antonius und seine Stellung zu den ägyptischen Göttern," *Altertum* 11 (1965) 40-47.

[114] H. Jeanmaire, "La politique religieuse d'Antoine et de Cléopatre," *Revue Archéologique* 19 (1924) 242; L. R. Taylor, *The Divinity of the Roman Emperor* (Middletown, Connecticut 1931) 106; *id.*, "Foreign Groups in Roman Politics of the

constructed.[115] When Antony left Rome, Octavian apparently saw no immediate need for further concessions to the multitude and did not construct the temple. Once such a decree was issued, however, it must be supposed that the cult of Isis and Sarapis was practiced freely among the lower classes, who must have understood the decree as the equivalent of recognition of the cult, and that the gods received new private altars and sanctuaries. Whether private colleges rose up again with such repeated force as they once had in spite of Caesar's dissolving of them is difficult to prove, but the rise of the Senate from the leading class *in* the state to a position of sovereignty *over* the state[116] since Caesar's time had dulled somewhat the initiative of the revolutionary lower classes, who, as *Isiaci*, had harrassed the state authority in earlier years. Their strength was still such, however, as to cause in 21 B.C. at least one more incident overtly dangerous to the government.

Meanwhile, Antony's activities had led him to his liaison with Cleopatra in 41 B.C. The tremendous influence which Cleopatra had on Antony can be seen from the triumph staged by them at Alexandria after Antony's victory over the Armenians in 34 B.C. Rather than presenting his spoils to Capitoline Jupiter as was proper, he gave them to Cleopatra as she sat on a throne in the garb of Isis.[117] Having then usurped the rights of Jupiter, she soon became known as θεὰ νεωτέρα or νέα Ἶσις,[118] a title appearing on her coins in the latter part of her reign.[119] Antony, who had already assumed the title of the New Dionysus

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Late Republic," *Hommages à Joseph Bidez et à Franz Cumont* (*Coll. Latomus*, vol. 2; Brussels 1949) 329. I. Becher, *Altertum* 11 (1965) 42, suggests the possibility that the voting of the temple could have been in part an attempt to control cult events.

[115] Roeder, "Isis," *RE* 9.2103; G. Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Römer* (2nd ed.; Munich 1912) 352 and n. 6; Cumont, *Les religions orientales* 78.

[116] Alföldi, *Schweizer Münzblätter* 5 (1954) 31.

[117] Dio Cass. 49.40.3; Plu., *Antony* 50; Taylor, *Divinity* 126.

[118] Plu., *Antony* 54.6.

[119] Taylor, *Divinity* 126 and references there. Ptolemy Soter's wife Berenice had already been identified with Aphrodite and Isis, appearing under the form of Isis on certain objects, cameos, and semi-precious stones. (J. Tondriau, *Les souveraines lagides en déesses au 3e siècle a.c., E. Pap.* [1948] 6.) Likewise, Arsinoe II, wife of Ptolemy Philadelphus, had also been identified with Aphrodite and Isis. See Brady, *Reception* 13. Dedications were made to her as "Isis Arsinoe Philadelphus" by the Greeks at Alexandria. (*Papiri greci e latini* [Florence 1912 ff.] 5.539.3.) Sacrificial

in 38 B.C., now posed with Cleopatra for paintings and statues, he representing Osiris or Dionysus and she Isis or Selene.[120]

Octavian became increasingly hostile to the Egyptian cults in proportion as Antony united himself to them. Octavian was now waging not a civil war but a war against Egypt.[121] His speech to the army as related by Dio Cassius (50.24-30) was a piece of propaganda filled with scorn for every aspect of Egyptian custom. In it Antony is portrayed as having so fully submitted to Egyptian manners as to no longer be considered a Roman citizen. As to Antony's reverence for the Roman gods, he was at war with them as well as with his country.[122] In this Virgil was Octavian's spokesman in *Aeneid* 8.696-730 where Actium becomes a battle between the gods and men of each country. Neptune, Venus, Minerva, and Apollo take Octavian's side, while the queen, who gives the call to battle with the sistrum,[123] and Antony are protected by *omnigenumque deum monstra et latrator Anubis*. The calculated absence of the names of Isis, Sarapis, and Harpocrates should here be noted. Such propaganda would not be effective if a god who was so popular were ridiculed. The Romans never had anything but scorn for the bestial divinities of the Egyptians, consequently invective directed against such gods could only serve to further the author's purpose, a purpose likely to have been solicited by Octavian himself.[124]

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vases with the legend 'To the good fortune of Arsinoe Philadelphus Isis' were used by Alexandrian women. (R. Mowat, "Le vase sacrificatoire des Reines d'Egypte," *Revue Numismatique* 5 (1901] 14-35.) Berenice II, wife of Euergetes, was associated with Isis in oaths and also assimilated herself to the goddess. A papyrus of Crocodilopolis mentions a private sanctuary of Isis Berenice and Aphrodite Arsinoe. A marble from the Iseum in Rome perhaps represents Berenice II as Isis, (cf. Dunand, *Le culte d'Isis* 1. pl. XIV) and she appears under the same form on two stones of Paris. (Cf. Dunand, *Le culte d'Isis* 1.38 n. 4 for a bibliography.) Ptolemy Philopater's wife, Arsinoe III, is represented as Isis on two stones, and Cleopatra I, Cleopatra II, and Cleopatra III were also identified with Isis. (Dunand, *Le culte d'Isis* 1.40-41.)

[120] Dio Cass. 50.5.2-3; 50.25.2-4.

[121] I. Becher, *Altertum* 11 (1965) 40.

[122] Dio Cass. 50.27.7.

[123] On the use of the sistrum here and the later influence of Virgil's representation of Actium see I. Becher, *Altertum* 11 (1965) 44-47.

[124] *Ibid.* Cf. C. Bailey who states that the purpose of Augustus's religious reforms was to banish the oriental cults, "and in this aim Virgil seconded him with the zeal and consistency of complete abstention." *Religion in Virgil* (New York 1935) 182.

In the year 28 B.C. Augustus began his great religious reforms in an attempt to revive the ancient Roman piety. At the same time he prohibited the celebration of the Egyptian rites within the pomerium.[125] Not only was there a degree of caution in this limited restriction, but his further measures providing for the restoration of sanctuaries to the Egyptian gods indicate a desire to maintain some harmony with the popular elements.[126] It was perhaps his intent to set up the principate, that dual form of democracy, which necessitated a concession, external and superficial as it was, to the rabble.[127] Evidently, Augustus's restriction gained little obeisance from the people. While he was in Sicily in 21 B.C., troubles that broke out in Rome forced him to send M. Agrippa to the city with special powers. That the *Isiaci* had a part in the action is proved by Agrippa's decree prohibiting practice of the cult within a radius of one mile of the pomerium.[128]

The most severe persecution of Isis worshipers was to come under the reign of Tiberius in 19 A.D. following a scandal in which a noble matron, Paulina, was seduced by a knight, Decius Mundus, under the guise of Anubis in the temple of Isis.[129] Furthermore, the priests of the temple had been bribed to assist in the plot. Mundus's sense of accomplishment impelled him to brag of his deed, and news of it soon reached Tiberius. The temple priests were crucified along with a woman who had conspired with them, and Mundus was exiled. In addition, four thousand freedmen devoted to Egyptian or Jewish beliefs were exiled to Sardinia; others were ordered to depart from Italy unless they gave up their beliefs before a certain day.[130]

At the beginning of the empire the Egyptian cults began to spread

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The abstention seems not to have been complete. Here, in the one place in which mention of the Egyptian gods could be used to scorn the cult, Virgil did not abstain but took a stand against the gods.

[125] Dio Cass. 53.2.4.

[126] *Ibid.*, 53.2-4-5.

[127] Lambrechts, *Augustus* 34.

[128] Dio Cass. 54.6.6.

[129] Joseph., *Ant. iud.* 18.65-80. For a further discussion of this passage see *infra.*

[130] Suet., *Tib.* 36 and Tac., *Ann.* 2.85.5 tell of the banishment of those addicted to the Egyptian and Jewish rites under the reign of Tiberius but do not relate the Paulina story as the cause of this banishment.

to the Western provinces.[131] In nearly every case they spread from Italy rather than through the direct influence of Egypt or from the East in general. Exceptions to this rule occurred in the case of Spain and in certain territories of North Africa where the cult was in evidence from the first century B.C. The major point of discussion in regard to the Isis cult in the provinces has been to what extent the native provincials were truly won over and to what extent the cult was present in the provinces only because of merchants, orientals, soldiers, and imperial officials. J. Toutain in his early work on the pagan cults in the Roman empire[132] suggested that the Egyptian cult was not very widespread in the provinces but was adhered to mainly by the transient elements of society. F. Cumont[133] would object to this idea, preferring to understand Italy and the Latin provinces as a unit and to view all of the oriental cults as intermingled with each other. V. Wessetzky in his work on the Egyptian cults in Hungary[134] came to the conclusion that the supporters of the Isis cult in that area were merchants, military men, orientals, and perhaps the lower classes. Most recently L. Vidman[135] has asserted that we must realize that the cult in Italy was more widespread and more deeply rooted than in the provinces and emphasizes that Italy and the Latin provinces cannot be considered as one sphere. As a reflection of this he notes that from Italy outside of Rome we possess two hundred inscriptions while from all of the Western provinces we have about one hundred and fifty.[136] In some instances Egyptian and Egyptianizing art and culture were merely the style of the times, but where temples and cult associations existed, the Isiac religion was more deeply rooted. Orientals, especially Egyptians, played only a subordinate part in the spreading of the cult in the Latin provinces, as likewise did soldiers. For the most part, it was merchants, legates, procurators, and lower imperial officials who were responsible for its spread.

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[131] For the widespread area in which artifacts pertaining to the Isis cult have been found see the maps in Witt, *Isis* 36-37, 264-65.

[132] J. Toutain, *Les cultes paiens dans l'empire romain* (Paris 1911) 2.5-34.

[133] F. Cumont in his review of Toutain, *Les cultes* 2 in *RHR* 33 (1912) 125-129.

[134] V. Wessetzky, *Die ägyptischen Kulte zur Römerzeit in Ungarn* (Leiden 1961).

[135] Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis* 106-124.

[136] From Italy alone including Rome there are three hundred twenty-eight Isiac inscriptions. Malaise, *Les conditions de pénétration* 13-14 n. 1.

Among Caligula's first acts on entering office were his acknowledgement of the cult of Isis and his building of a temple of Isis on the Campus Martius.[137] Although the cult was thus officially recognized, it should be noted that the temple was built outside the pomerium and that there is no concrete evidence that the official ban on the cult within the pomerium was actually removed. It was during Caligula's reign that the Isiac festival which commemorated the death and resurrection of Osiris was made *sacra publica populi Romani.*[138] In his palace on the Palatine he decorated a room, now known as the *aula isiaca,* with wall paintings depicting numerous symbols of the Egyptian religion—lotus blossoms, situlas, the uraeus, winged sun disks, ibises, ostrich plumes, and garlands of roses. Isis herself or one of her priestesses appears there, and two tableaux depict scenes related to Egyptian custom—one shows Helen and a young man, either Paris or one of the Dioscuri,[139] disembarking after a sojourn in Egypt; the other portrays an eagle holding a situla in his claws and seems to be connected to the mysteries of Isis.[140] The

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[137] E. Köberlein, *Caligula und die ägyptischen Kulte* (Meisenheim am Glan 1962) 12. The temple was built in 38 A.D. (Cumont, *Les religions orientales* 80; id. , "La salle isiaque de Caligula au Palatin," *RHR* 114 [1936] 128). For a discussion of the problems of dating the temple see Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus* 353 ff. There were actually two separate buildings, one an Iseum, the other a Serapeum. See Lafaye, *Histoire du culte,* 216-226; S. B. Platner and T. Ashby, *A Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome* (Oxford 1929) 283-85; G. Gatti, "Topografia dell'Iseo Campense," *Rendiconti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archaeologia* 20 (1943-44) 117-163; E. Nash, *Pictorial Dictionary of Ancient Rome* (2nd ed.; New York 1968) 1.510 and the bibliography there.

[138] Mommsen, CIL 1^2, p. 333-34. Tran Tam Tinh, *Essai* 24 cites this same source but says that it was Nero who had the Isiac festivals inserted in the Roman calendar. Mommsen calculates the dates of the *Isia,* October 28-November 1, using a reference in Plu., *DIO* 39 (366E) as a starting point and adjusting the date according to the *Wandeljahr* at the time when the *Isia* became a Roman festival. R. Merkelbach, *Isisfeste in griechisch-römischer Zeit, Daten und Riten* (Meisenheim am Glan 1963) 50 and n. 29, believes that the Romans put an end to the meaning of the *Wandeljahr* when Octavian conquered Egypt at Actium. From then on the year was fixed, and the date of the *Isia* corresponded to its date in that year.

[139] On the association of the cult of the Dioscuri with that of Isis see Tran Tam Tinh, *Essai* 50 n. 5.

[140] Cumont, *RHR* 114 (1936) 127-28 in which he discusses G. Rizzo, *Monumenti della pittura antica,* fasc. II. *Le pitture dell'aula isiaca di Caligola* (Rome 1936); Köberlein, *Caligula* 24-25. For a summary account of opinions on the dating of the frescoes

recent study of Caligula and the Egyptian cults by E. Köberlein demonstrates that the emperor imitated Egyptian custom in nearly every aspect of his life, from his amnesty for captives, fugitives, and exiles on his accession to the throne to the daily ritual of having his statue clothed and offering to it sacrifices of precious birds, from his incest with Drusilla to his wanderings after her death in a kind of Osirian mourning ritual. Caligula's blood-relationship to Antony, the atmosphere in which he was raised at his grandmother Antonia's house along with the Egyptian princes, Rhoimetalkes III, Polemo II, and Kotys I, and his desire to imitate the divine rulers of Egypt all combined to influence his permissive policy toward the Egyptian cults. In the midst of such Egyptian influence, however, the extent of Caligula's personal devotion to the cult of Isis and the degree to which his policies were motivated by his desire to make Egyptian beliefs part of the Roman state religion are still uncertain.[141] Every instance of Egyptian influence certainly cannot be interpreted as an indication of adherence to the cult of Isis. None of the extant sources give any indication of Caligula's personal connection with Isis unless we are to count the vague statement of Suetonius (*Caligula* 57) that at the time of Caligula's death a rehearsal of certain nocturnal performances in which scenes from the lower world were represented by Egyptians and Ethiopians was taking place.

While little is known for certain of the reactions of Claudius and Nero to the Isiac cult, it is safe to assume that this was a period of tolerance. Though Claudius is known to have disliked foreign superstitions,[142] his introduction of the Eleusinian mysteries into Rome shows an interest in Greek religion which could have extended to the Isiac cult since it was a Hellenized form of ancient Egyptian worship.[143] He understood the attraction of the mystery cults and instead of systematically opposing them he either tolerated them or, if they were in some way associated with Roman tradition, as were the Eleusinian mysteries, he acclimatized them.[144] In any case, we hear of no persecutions of Isiacs

of the *aula isiaca* see Tran Tam Tinh, *Essai* 24 n. 8. See the bibliography there and in Nash, *Pictorial Dictionary* 1.316.

[141] J. P. V. D. Baldson in a review of Köberlein, *Caligula* in *CR* 78 (1964) 91.

[142] Tac., *Ann.* 11.15.

[143] Lafaye, *Histoire du culte* 58; Witt, *Isis* 224.

[144] J. Beaujeu, *La religion romaine à l'apogée de l'empire, I : La politique religieuse des Antonins (96-192)* (Paris 1955) 45.

during his reign nor in that of Nero who himself participated in a wide variety of religious rites and eventually scorned them all.

Interest in the Egyptian cults among the Roman emperors increased greatly during the period of Flavian rule. This was due for the most part to the ever-increasing desire of the emperors to realize their autocratic intentions by imitating the Ptolemies.[145] Had Antony gained the victory at Actium, the concept of a divine emperor would have been established then and there. But with the establishment of the principate, it was thrust to the background and gradually through a process of evolution rose to the surface again. The concept of a *living* divine emperor was completely alien to the Roman mind, but the influx of eastern religion weakened this resistance. Ambitious emperors encouraged these religions as a means of introducing absolute rule. The assumption by the emperors of titles commonly given to the eastern divinities was directly connected with attempts to unite themselves with deities in order to gradually reach the goal of a living divine monarch. Evidence of the increasing interest of the emperors in the Egyptian cults is plentiful for the Flavians.

Otho was the first emperor to openly display sympathy for the cults. In a desire for popularity,[146] he publicly celebrated the rites of Isis in linen garments.[147] Two miraculous incidents connected with Sarapis are related concerning Vespasian. While Vespasian was in Alexandria previous to his accession, Tacitus reports,[148] two men, one blind, the

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[145] This idea is set forth by Abd El-Mohsen El-Khachab, "'*Ο 'ΚΑΡΑΚΑΛΛΟΣ' ΚΟΣΜΟΚΡΑΤΩΡ*," *JEA* 47 (1961) 119-133. For a detailed account of the progression of the divinity of the emperor see L. Cerfaux and J. Tondriau, *Un concurrent du christianisme. Le culte des souverains dans la civilisation greco-romaine* (Tournai 1957).

[146] Lafaye, *Histoire du culte* 60.

[147] Suet., *Otho* 12.1. This seems to have been before he was emperor (Alföldi, *A Festival* 45 n. 99). Malaise, *Les conditions de pénétration* 404, 406, has suggested that it may have been Poppea, Otho's wife, who influenced his devotion to the Egyptian gods. There has been found at Pompeii in the house of her cousin Poppaeus Habitus an Isiac lararia adorned with representations of Isis, Osiris, Harpocrates, and Anubis as well as statuettes of Horus and Isis-Fortuna and two Isiac lamps. (cf. Tran Tam Tinh, *Essai* 48-49).

[148] Tac., *Hist.* 4.81-82. This story is also related by Suet., *Vespasian* 7 and Dio Cass. 66.8. Although most historians simply combine these stories into one, P. Dorchain and J. Hubaux in "Vespasien au Serapeum," *Latomus* 12 (1953) 39-53 prefer to

other with a maimed hand, came to him seeking a cure on the directive of Sarapis. After some delay for consultation with physicians as to whether these infirmities could be overcome, Vespasian effected the desired cures. Moved to know more of the god, the emperor then visited his sanctuary in Alexandria,[149] and, entering and contemplating alone, he saw a vision of Basilides, one of the foremost men of Egypt, who, he later discovered, was ill and far way from Alexandria at the time. From the name Basilides Vespasian interpreted the mysterious omen : he was, to be the future βασιλέυς of the Roman Empire. Later, in Rome Vespasian and his son Titus, who already had taken part in the consecration of the Memphian Apis bull,[150] spent the night before the triumph celebrating their victory over the Jews in the *Iseum Campense*,[151] and it was from this temple that the triumphal procession began. Two coins of Vespasian commemorated this event by portraying the Iseum on their reverse.[152] During the war with Vitellius, in 69 A.D., Domitian managed to escape enemy forces by disguising himself as a priest of Isis and mingling with the other priests,[153] just as the aedile M. Volusius had done

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emphasize the differences in the accounts. Suetonius puts the healing of the two men immediately after Vespasian's exit from the Serapeum, and the reception of letters announcing the death of Vitellius immediately after the healing. This progression of events seems more plausible to Dorchain and Hubaux, who conclude that Tacitus, sollicitous of the prestige of Rome, sought to minimize the Egyptian role. See also P. Dorchain, "La visite de Vespasian au Serapeum d'Alexandrie," *Chronique d'Egypte* 28 (1953) 251-79.

[149] A different version of the temple visit is told by Philostr., *Vita Apoll.* 5.27 ff.

[150] Suet., *Tit.* 5.

[151] Joseph., *Bell. iud.* 7.123.

[152] RIC 2, p. 70, #453—a bronze coin of 71 A.D. : Obverse : IMP. CAESAR VESPASIANUS AUG. P.M.T.P.P.P. COS. III. Head, laureate, right or bust with aegis, laureate, right : globe below neck; Reverse : S.C. Tetrastyle temple of Isis with semi-circular pediment.

RIC 2, p. 78, #537—a bronze coin of 73 A.D. : Obverse : IMP CAES. VESP. AUG. P.M.T.P.P.P. COS. IIII CENS. Head, laureate, right. Reverse : S.C. Tetrastyle temple of Isis with semi-circular pediment.

L. Vidman, "Die Isis- und Sarapisverehrung im 3. Jahrhundert u.Z.," *Neue Beiträge zur Geschichte der Alten Welt* (Berlin 1965) 2.389 gives a word of caution on the use of coins in the study of cults : their occurrence is not always witnessed by the existence of a public cult, and the Egyptian deities in particular often appear after the style of the time.

[153] Tac., *Hist.* 3.74; Suet., *Dom.* 1.2.

years before.[154] No doubt it was as a gesture of gratitude that Domitian in 92 A.D. rebuilt the temple of Isis on the Campus Martius[155] which had been burned in 80 A.D. Before this, in the year 88 A.D., he had either rebuilt or enlarged the Iseum at Beneventum.[156] The obelisk inscriptions do not state clearly whether the Iseum was a new building or merely an expansion and refurnishing of an already existing Isis temple, nor do they indicate whether the divinities worshiped there were united in a single room or whether they were worshiped in separate rooms.[157] There Domitian's statue appears dressed in the garments of a pharaoh. On the obelisks here, which he had brought from the Nile valley along with sphinxes and cynocephali,[158] he is addressed with oriental formulas: "O King live for ever!"[159] Apparently, then, the emperor had a serious interest in the Egyptian cults, though how deeply personal this interest was is questionable.[160] Finally, a coin of his shows on the reverse a temple in which the seated figure of Sarapis holds a *patera* and a scepter.[161]

Evidence of interest in Isis and Sarapis increased with the Antonine emperors. A bas-relief on Trajan's triumphal arch in Rome shows that emperor in the presence of Isis and Harpocrates offering them a gift of wine.[162] Yet, there is evidence that Trajan was cool to the Egyptian religion. Pliny praises the emperor for having banished from his table the servants of a strange superstition, that is the priests of the Alexandrine cults whose alimentary restrictions Domitian had observed.[163]

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[154] Val. Max. 7.3.8; App., *Bell. civ.* 4.47.

[155] Eutr. 7.23.5 : ... Romae multa fecit Domitianus, in his Capitolium et Forum transitorium, Divorum porticus, Isium ac Serapium et stadium ...

[156] Witt, *Isis* 234.

[157] H. W. Müller, *Der Isiskult im antiken Beneventum und Katalog der Skulpturen aus den ägyptischen Heiligtümern im Museo del Sannio zu Benevent* (Berlin 1969) 21.

[158] Cumont, *Les religions orientales* 82 ; A. D. Nock, *Conversion* (Oxford 1933) 126. Müller, *Der Isiskult im antiken Beneventum* 17, distinguishes two stylistic groups of figures found in Beneventum : 1) those transported from old Egyptian temples; 2) those which were commissioned in Egypt by Domitian for the Isis temple in Beneventum.

[159] Witt, *Isis* 234.

[160] Cf. Müller, *Der Isiskult im antiken Beneventum* 23.

[161] RIC 2, p. 178, #204 - 88-96 A.D.; Pl. V. 85b (reverse only).

[162] Witt, *Isis* 235.

[163] Pliny, *Paneg.* 49.8; Beaujeu, *La religion romaine* 102; Lafaye, *Histoire du culte*

There is, however, no evidence of restrictive measures under his reign.

Hadrian's policies in the sphere of religion are somewhat confusing, The life in the *Historia Augusta* relates that he was very much concerned for the Roman cults, but scorned those of foreign origin.[164] Yet, he seems to have encouraged, at least outside the city of Rome, the expansion of the Egyptian cults.[165] As for his personal beliefs, he wavered among various religions. Beaujeu contends that Hadrian did not favor the oriental cults from the beginning of his reign.[166] His travels in Egypt and the death of his beloved Antinous deeply influenced his attitude toward the Egyptian religion. An Alexandrian bronze coin of 132/133 on which Sarapis and Hadrian stand within a sanctuary proves, according to Beaujeu,[167] that Hadrian undertook the construction of a Serapeum at Alexandria. It is probable that within the Serapeum itself Hadrian built the Hadrianeum.[168] When Hadrian returned to Rome, he issued a series of gold, silver, and bronze coins in honor of the provinces. All mention of religion and the gods is there excluded with one exception. On the reverse of a bronze issued in honor of Alexandria,[169] Sarapis and Isis appear, welcoming Hadrian and his wife Sabina, just as on an Alexandrian bronze of 130/131.[170] Again in 134-138 Isis is represented, this time appearing alone on the reverse of a bronze issue of the Senate; she wears a lotus-flower on her head and sits on a dog, while holding a sistrum and a spear.[171] In his own villa at Tibur Hadrian imitated the exterior of the Serapeum of Canopus near Alexandria and exhibited images of the Egyptian gods. In all of this, however, Hadrian did not show such vigor as he did in his actions to promote the interest

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61 n. 9. Beaujeu and Lafaye believe that this passage of Pliny alludes not to Jewish but to Isiac custom.

[164] SHA, *Hadrian* 22.10. F. R. Walton in "Religious Thought in the Age of Hadrian," *Numen* 4 (1957) 167 suggests that the model for this passage is Suet., *Augustus* 93.

[165] Witt, *Isis* 236.

[166] Beaujeu, *La religion romaine* 221.

[167] *Ibid.*, 230-231 and references there.

[168] *Ibid.*, 232.

[169] RIC 2, p. 452, #877.

[170] Beaujeu, *La religion romaine* 228 n. 3.

[171] RIC 2, p. 444, #826.

of the Greek gods.[172] His interest in the Alexandrian cults was prompted by his attraction for the mystic and the occult in Egyptian life.

Hadrian's successor Antoninus Pius showed a coolness toward the Alexandrian cults,[173] but nonetheless issued a coin on which Isis appeared on the reverse and Faustina the Elder on the obverse.[174] Isis also appears on the coins of Marcus Aurelius.[175]

Not only do the coins of Commodus celebrate the oriental cults,[176]

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[172] Beaujeu, *La religion romaine* 241.

[173] *Ibid.*, 320.

[174] RIC 3, p. 307, #1197 - 138-141 A.D. : Obverse : DIVA FAUSTINA with a veiled bust of Faustina I facing left. Reverse : S. C. Isis, her body facing front, but her head turned to the left, is seated on a dog and holds the sistrum. While Mattingly and Sydenham list this as a coin, it is, according to A. D. Nock ("The Development of Paganism in the Roman Empire," *CAH* 12, ch. 12, p. 415 n. 3) a medallion.

[175] RIC 3, p. 351, #1725. Obverse : FAUSTINA AUGUSTA with the bust of Faustina II facing left. Reverse : No legend. Isis with a lotus flower on her head holds the sistrum. At her feet on the left side stands a peacock, on the right a lion.

RIC 3, p. 351, #1726. Obverse : FAUSTINA AUGUSTA with the bust of Faustina II facing right. Reverse : No legend. Isis Pharia walking to the right. Her veil flies above her head and she holds the sistrum. Behind her is a light-house, before her a ship with a mast and sail.

[176] RIC 3, p. 434. #601 - 191 A.D. : Obverse : L. AEL. AUREL. COMM. AUG. P. FEL. Head, laureate, right. Reverse : SERAPIDI CONSERV. AUG. COS. VI P. P.S.C. Sarapis, radiate, standing right, head turned back left, raising right hand and holding scepter.

RIC 3, p. 435, #605 : Obverse : L. AEL. AUREL. COMM. AUG. P. FEL. Head, radiate, right. Reverse : SERAPIDI CONSERV. AUG. COS. VI. P.P.S.C. Sarapis standing right, as on #601.

RIC 3, p. 435, #607 : Obverse : = #601. Reverse : = #605.

RIC 3, p. 436, #614a - 192 A.D. : Obverse : L. AEL. AUREL. COMM. AUG. P. FEL. Head, laureate, right or bust, laureate, draped right. Reverse : P.M. TR. P. XVII IMP. VIIII COS. VII P.P.S.C. Commodus standing left, crowned by Victory, clasping right hands with Sarapis over altar : by Sarapis stands Isis right, holding sistrum. Pl. XVI 334 (rev. only).

RIC 3, p. 436, #614b - 192 A.D. : Obverse : Legend = #614a, bust draped, head bare right. Reverse : Legend = #614a.

RIC 3, p. 437, #621 - 192 A.D. : Obverse : Legend = #614a, head, radiate, right. Reverse : Legend = #614a, Commodus standing left, faced by Sarapis and Isis.

RIC 3, p. 438, #630 - 192 A.D. : Obverse : Legend = #614a, head, laureate, right. Reverse : = #614a.

RIC 3, p. 397, #261 - 191-92 A.D. : Obverse : Legend = #614a, head, laureate, right. Reverse : SERAPIDI CONSERV. AUG. Sarapis, radiate, standing front,

but the same was true of Commodus himself.[177] He went so far as to shave his head and carry a statue of Anubis,[178] and he forced the devotees of Isis to beat their breasts with pine-cones as a form of penance. In this same vein he struck the heads of the Isis worshipers with the face of the Anubis statue he carried about. On a colonnade in his garden a mosaic pictured Commodus's intimate friends performing the rites of Isis.[179] Among them was Pescennius Niger, one of the foes of Septimius Severus, holding the symbols of Isis. Commodus's active participation in the official ritual of the Alexandrian cults gave them tremendous prestige, particularly among the higher social classes.[180]

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head left, holding branch and scepter. Pl. XV 312 (reverse only). For a discussion of a small but enigmatic group of medallions issued under Commodus see Beaujeu, *La religion romaine* 378-88.

[177] SHA, *Commodus* 9.4-6; *Caracalla* 9.10-11.

[178] Alföldi, *A Festival* 42-46 observes that the *Historia Augusta*, contains a great deal of anti-Christian interpolation and distortion of facts (following J. Geffcken, "Religionsgeschichtliches in der *Historia Augusta*," *Hermes* 55 [1920] 279-95). The author of the *Vita Commodi*, in defense of the pagan party, wanted to show that important personalities of the past had been devoted to the pagan cults. Alföldi, while he thinks it possible that the frenzy of the last years of Commodus's reign could have allowed the emperor to shave his head and carry the Anubis-statue, believes it improbable and points to the many portraits of Commodus, all showing him with curly hair. Moreover, another distortion of fact, according to Alföldi, appears in the understanding of "Anubim portaret." The author makes the phrase mean to carry the statue in his hand, whereas it properly meant to wear the mask of Anubis. (Cf. App., *Bell. civ.* 4.47; Apul., *Met.* 11.11.) In fact, Alföldi is incorrect on this point. While it is true that the mask of Anubis was in use (see the Anubis mask on a relief from Savaria, VS 662=CIL 3.10908, and further examples in Tran Tam Tinh, *Essai* #31, pl. V, 3, and Witt, *Isis* pl. 46), Anubophors who carried statues of the god Anubis also existed (VS 742=CIL 12.1919). The Anubophors were a type of hierophor or pastophor, lower priests who were responsible for carrying statues of the gods. Likewise, see Malaise, *Les conditions de pénétration* 434, and in his *Inventaire préliminaire des documents égyptiens découverts en Italie* (Leiden 1972) Roma 352 and 368, pp. 195, 198-99, which describe reliefs of columns of the *Iseum Campense* that preserve an image of a priest carrying in his arms a canopus with the head of a jackal. Since the reference here is to carrying the statue of Anubis, there is no reason to make it mean anything but that.

[179] SHA, *Pescennius Niger* 6.8-9.

[180] Dio Cass. 72.15 mentions a statue of gold of Commodus which represents the emperor with a bull and a cow. H. P. L'Orange, *Apotheosis in Ancient Portraiture* (Oslo 1947) 72 states that this "can only be understood as Commodus-Horus between

Septimius Severus reportedly enjoyed his trip to Alexandria all the more because of the religion of Sarapis,[181] and on his return to Rome he represented himself under the aspect of the Alexandrian god.[182] But it was under Caracalla that the cults of Isis and Sarapis reached the height of their popularity. The reign of Caracalla witnessed the attainment of the goal of a theocracy patterned after the Egyptian. The connection of the emperor with the divine is evident from a coin on which Caracalla, portrayed as Sarapis, is cosmocrator, having power over heaven and earth.[183] It was Caracalla who finally in 217 legalized what for nearly 200 years had not in practice been restricted. The ban on the performance of the Egyptian rites within the pomerium was abolished.[184] Caracalla, called *philosarapis*,[185] was especially devoted to the cults himself, celebrating the ceremonies with more solemnity than anyone before him. This, too, in spite of the fact that his supplications to Sarapis for better health were in vain.[186] In his travels Caracalla made a trip to Alexandria to sacrifice to Sarapis and to honor the memory of Alexander.[187] During his slaughtering of the Alexandrians he made the temple of Sarapis his headquarters, issuing orders from there.[188] The very sword with which he murdered his brother he dedicated to the god.[189] His visit to Egypt was commemorated by two coins on both of which Isis appeared.[190] In addition, several other coin-types of Caracalla show

Osiris-Apis and the cow Isis, having its natural place with the many manifestations of Commodus' Egyptian religiosity."

[181] SHA, *Sever.* 17.

[182] L'Orange, *Apotheosis* 77.

[183] Abd El-Mohsen El-Khachab, *JEA* 47 (1961) 124 and pl. X.1.

[184] SHA, *Caracalla* 9.10-11; Herodian 4.8.6-7; Aurel. Victor, *Caes.* 21.4. Now for the first time these foreign divinities, by being brought within the pomerium, were made equal to the Roman gods. Hence, perhaps, the statement that Caracalla "sacra Isidis Romam deportavit." (Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus* 355).

[185] IGRR 1.1063, an inscription of the year 216 A.D. from Alexandria.

[186] Dio Cass. 77.15.6-7.

[187] Herodian 4.8.6-7.

[188] Dio Cass. 77.23.1.

[189] Dio Cass. 77.23.3; 78.7.3-4.

[190] RIC 4.1, p. 249, #257a - 215 A.D. : Obverse : ANTONINUS PIUS AUG. GERM. Head, laureate, left. Reverse : P.M. TR. P. XVIII COS. IIII P.P. Isis standing right, holding sistrum and presenting two corn-ears to Caracalla, who stands left, in military dress, holding spear and trampling on crocodile.

RIC 4.1, p. 249, #257b - 215 A.D. : Obverse : Legend = #257a, bust, laureate, draped, cuirassed, left. Reverse : = #257a.

Isis and Sarapis,[191] and three coins of Julia Domna, his mother, have Isis on the reverse.[192] He was responsible also for the construction of magnificent temples to the Alexandrian gods. One such temple was that on the Caelian Hill which is either from Caracalla's reign or slightly earlier.[193] That on the Quirinal also dates from the reign of Caracalla.[194] So popular was Isis during this period that by some she was no longer even considered foreign.[195]

In a recent article Ladislav Vidman[196] has called attention to the competition among the oriental religions during this period. A small marble pillar in the Mithraeum of the baths of Caracalla dating from the age of Caracalla has inscribed on the front *Εἷς Ζεὺς | Μίτρας | Ἥλιος | κοσμοκράτωρ || ἀνείκητος*. The original reading in line two was *Σάραπις* but after Caracalla's death the word was blotted out and

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[191] RIC 4.1, p. 303, #544; p. 239, #193, #194; p. 241, #208; p. 246, #244; p. 250, #263a,b,c,d,e,f; p. 253, #280a,b,c,d,e; p. 255, #289a,b,c,d,e,f; p. 256, #290, #291a,b,c, #292; p. 294, #497; p. 295, #502, #505; p. 306, # 561a,b.

[192] RIC 4.1, p. 170, #577 - 196-211 A.D. : Obverse : IULIA AUGUSTA, bust, draped, right, hair waved and coiled at back. Reverse : SAECULI FELICITAS, Isis, wearing peaked headdress, standing right, left foot on prow, with the infant Horus at her breast : to left, altar, against which rests a rudder.

RIC 4.1, p. 170, #645 - 196-202 A.D. : Obverse : IULIA AUGUSTA, bust, draped, right, hair waved and coiled at back. Reverse : SAECULI FELICITAS, Isis standing as on #577.

RIC 4.1, p. 209, #865 - 193-196 A.D. : Obverse : IULIA AUGUSTA, bust of Julia, draped, right, hair waved and coiled at back. Reverse : SAECULI FELICITAS S.C., Isis standing right, foot on prow, with Horus at her breast : behind, altar against which rests rudder.

[193] SHA, *Trig. tyr.* 25.4. This temple has not yet been found. See the archaeological evidence from this area (Region II) in Lafaye, *Histoire du culte* 200-203 and his catalogue #107, 108, 115. In 1848 an inscription to Isis regina (VS 370 = CIL 6. 354) was found near the church of Santa Maria in Domnica (or in Navicella). It dates from 198-209 A.D. and would seem to indicate the existence of a temple in this region already under Septimius Severus.

[194] The exact position of this temple is not certain. VS 374=CIL 6.570 and VS 375=IG 14.1024 prove that such a temple was dedicated by Caracalla to Sarapis. Cf. also VS 376=CIL 6.573. See Lafaye, *Histoire du culte* 211-215; Platner and Ashby, *A Topographical Dictionary* 487; Nash, *Pictorial Dictionary* 2.376 and the bibliography there.

[195] Min. Fel., *Oct.* 23.1.

[196] Vidman, "Die Isis- und Sarapisverehrung ...," 389-400.

Μίτρας was inserted.[197] The word *ἀνείκητος* = *invictus* is also a key word. While the epithet especially characterized Mithra, it was employed here not so much as a sign of syncretism as of competition to use the title which was most popular with the masses.[198]

After this time evidence for interest in the Alexandrian divinities on the part of the emperors is much less frequent. Severus Alexander adorned the public temples of Isis and Sarapis with statues.[199] The mother of this emperor, Julia Mamaea, appears on a coin with the headdress of Isis.[200] Under Gordian III in 239 or 240 a coin was issued with the standing figure of Sarapis.[201] The coins of both Gallienus[202] and Claudius Gothicus[203] give evidence of the Alexandrian cults. Diocletian displayed an interest in Egypt and rebuilt the *Iseum Campense*.[204] His coins reveal syncretism of the traditional Roman gods with the Egyptian, as do those of Galerius.[205]

Isis persisted on the coins and still had a circle of followers throughout

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[197] This theory was first proposed by F. Cumont and L. Canet in "Mithra ou Sarapis *κοσμοκράτωρ*" *CRAI* (1919) 313-328.

[198] Vidman, "Die Isis-und Sarapisverehrung . . .," 391.

[199] SHA, *Sever.* 26.

[200] Witt, *Isis* 238, pl. 57.

[201] RIC 4.3, p. 18, #30 : Obverse : IMP. C.M. ANT. GORDIANUS AUG. with a bust of Gordian facing right. Reverse : P.M. TR. P. II COS. P.P., Sarapis is standing, facing the left, raising his right hand and holding a scepter.

[202] RIC 5.1, p. 132, #19 : Obverse : IMP. GALLIENUS PIUS FEL. AUG., helmeted, cuirassed, bust, right. Reverse : P.M. TR. P. VIIII COS. IIII P.P., Sarapis standing left, right hand raised, left holding spear; at foot, rabbit.

RIC 5.1, p. 184, #600 - 264 A.D. : Obverse : IMP. GALLIENUS P.F. AUG. COS. V., radiate, cuirassed, bust, right. Reverse : P.M. TR. P. XII COS. V P.P., Sarapis standing left, holding scepter.

[203] RIC 5.1, p. 228, #201 : Obverse : IMP. C. CLAUDIUS AUG., radiate, draped, bust, right. Reverse : CONSER. AUG., Sarapis standing left, right hand raised, left holding scepter.

RIC 5.1, p. 228, #202 : Obverse : Legend = #201, various positions. Reverse : CONSER. AUG., Sarapis standing left, holding scepter, facing Isis standing right, holding sistrum and basket.

RIC 5.1, p. 229, #217 : Obverse : Legend = #201, various bust positions. Reverse : SALUS AUG., Isis Pharia standing left, holding sistrum and basket.

[204] Drexler, "Isis," in Roscher, *Ausführliches Lexikon für griechische und römische Mythologie* (Leipzig 1882-1921) 2.406.

[205] Witt, *Isis* 239.

the fourth century. Now it was the noblest and most distinguished Romans who stood by the pagan cults, partially for political reasons. A remarkable series of coins, struck in Rome between 379/80 and 395 A.D. and once thought to have on the obverse the disguised representations of Julian the Apostate and his wife Helena, has been shown by Alföldi[206] to contain the busts of Isis and Sarapis. This was the last surge of the Isiac religion, if surge of religion it can be called, since the striking of such coins seems to have been motivated by a desire to win the popularity of the lower classes.[207] The Isiac religion during the late fourth century A.D. seems to have been no more than a persistence of certain ancient traditions. The festivity and color of Isiac processions no doubt still had their appeal among the lower classes, but a deeper religious meaning was absent. Even those members of the pagan senatorial party who supported the Egyptian religion did so partially as a means of opposition to the Christian emperor. Until the year 379 the likenesses of the emperor appeared on coins and medallions that also bore the images of the Alexandrian gods. In that year Gratian prohibited the striking of such coins although the practice continued until 394.

In 391 A.D. the destruction of the Serapeum in Alexandria removed what was in actuality the home base and the only centralizing force of the religion. That same year brought an edict prohibiting sacrifice to the pagan gods and the frequenting of their sanctuaries in Rome. In 394 A.D. the consul Nicomachus Flavianus celebrated the last official festivals of Magna Mater and Isis.[208] The final mention of an Isis festival is found in Rutilius Namatianus who speaks of a festival held in Falerii in 416 A.D.[209] Though small groups of believers for a while no doubt

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[206] Alföldi, *A Festival.*

[207] See *supra* p. 18.

[208] *Carmen in paganos* 98-99 :

quis te plangentem non risit, calvus ad aras
sistriferam Phariam supplex cum forte rogares?
cumque Osirim miserum luges ...

[209] Rut. Nam., *De red. suo* 1.371-76.

Lassantem cohibet vicina Faleria cursum,
quamquam vix medium Phoebus haberet iter.
et tum forte hilares per compita rustica pagi
mulcebant sacris pectora fessa iocis :
illo quippe die tandem revocatus Osiris
excitat in fruges germina laeta novas ...

remained outside of Rome, the religion eventually died, giving way to Christianity.

The Isiac religion, then, possessed a good deal of endurance. From the fourth century B.C. until the fourth century A.D. it was one of the most popular of the oriental religions. It spread gradually throughout the ancient world, reaching its peak of popularity in the second century A.D. While Sarapis was the dominant member of the family of gods in its initial appearance, Isis with all of her very human characteristics soon became the leading figure.

In most locations the cult of Isis was readily accepted, at first by private individuals, then publicly. In Rome, however, the stubborn opposition of political leaders, who suspected that all groups meeting secretly were plotting revolution, attempted to prevent involvement in the cult. Just as stubborn, however, was the desire of the populace to provide Sarapis and Isis with altars and temples. After several periods of persecution in the first century B.C. and the early first century A.D., the Egyptian gods eventually found favor with the Roman emperors only to lose any remaining strength when Christianity became officially recognized as the state religion.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ESSENTIAL NATURE OF ISIS

What is of prime importance in comprehending the great appeal Isis had for women is an understanding of precisely what she represented and what her essential attributes were. It is difficult to ascertain her original significance since her widespread appeal tended to cause an increasing accumulation of spheres that she governed and attributes that she possessed. Each new quality that she took on was accompanied by the assumption of a new name, and these forms and names grew so numerous that she came to be addressed as *πολύμορφος*,[1] *πολυώνυμος*,[2] and *μυριωνύμος*.[3]

Originally, Isis existed independently. It is particularly difficult to determine her character at this time when she was not as yet bound together with Osiris, since there is no concrete evidence from this early period that gives any clue to her identity. She seems to have been a cosmic deity, either a goddess of heaven and mother of the Sun-god, or the embodiment of the fertile land of the Delta, possessing creative powers such that she brought forth Horus without aid of a husband.[4] Her motherlike character seems to have been with her from the earliest times. More important for our purposes are the traits she possessed when, at the end of the development of the Egyptian religion, she and her son Horus were joined together with Osiris, the god of vegetation and death; henceforth, the three deities were considered a unit, although one might appear alone in an inscription or art form. The Pyramid Texts, the oldest body of Egyptian religious texts, inscribed on the walls

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[1] B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt (edd.), *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri XI* (1915) 1380.9, hereafter referred to as P. Oxy. 1380.

[2] VS 325=CIG 3724; P. Oxy. 1380.97, 101-102. In Apul., *Met.* 11.22 she is called *dea multinominis*.

[3] VS 505=IGRR 1.1391; VS 351; VS 639=CIL 5.5080; VS 656=CIL 3.4017; VS 692; VS 698=CIL 3.882; VS 721; VS 749=CIL 13.3461; VS 808. Vidman notes (VS 505) that all of these inscriptions seem to date from approximately the same period, i.e., the first-second century A.D.

[4] Roeder, "Isis", *RE* 9.2086.

of the pyramids at Sakkara where Egyptian kings of the fifth and sixth dynasties were buried, furnish a series of unconnected allusions to the myth that grew around the triad to explain their origins and significance. From these allusions it is evident that the myth of Isis and Osiris was already at that early date very familiar to the Egyptians. Plutarch in his treatise *De Iside et Osiride*, written in 118 or 119 A.D.,[5] however, has supplied us with a complete, connected version of the myth. Relying on a variety of literary sources relating to Egypt,[6] Plutarch introduced some new elements and omitted some old ones. However much the mythological allusions in the Pyramid Texts were conflated and however varied Plutarch's sources were, the roles of the main deities in the myth remained essentially constant. Isis performed three major functions which cannot be completely separated from one another.

In her first appearance, in the Pyramid Texts, Isis, as sister of Osiris, played the role of a mourner in conjunction with her sister Nephthys when they found their brother Osiris dead, either as a result of an encounter with Seth or of drowning.[7] Not as yet designated as the wife of Osiris, Isis assisted her brothers and sisters in the embalming rites that resulted in his revival. The rites involved an elaborate display of grief as handed down in three Ptolemaic texts now called "The Songs of Isis and Nephthys,"[8] "The Lamentations of Isis and Nephthys,"[9] and "The Hour-watches."[10] These were a series of chanted solos or duets which were a part of the dialogue used in the enactment of the passion of Osiris. The papyrus containing "The Songs" dates back at latest to the fourth century B.C., but an inscription from Ikhernofret reveals that such Osiris rites were at least as old as the Middle Kingdom.[11]

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[5] Griffiths 17.

[6] For a discussion of Plutarch's sources see Griffiths 75-100.

[7] *Ibid.*, 34.

[8] R. O. Faulkner, "The Bremner-Rhind Papyrus-I," *JEA* 22 (1936) 121-40. This is a translation and commentary of "The Songs of Isis and Nephthys." A transcription of the papyrus is published by R. O. Faulkner in *The Papyrus Bremner-Rhind* (*Bibliotheca Aegyptiaca*, 3) i.

[9] R. O. Faulkner, "The Lamentations of Isis and Nephthys," *Memoires publiées par l'Institut français d'archéologie oriental du Caire* 66 (1934 = *Mélanges Maspero*, vol. 1) 337-48. The text is from P. Berlin 3008.

[10] H. Junker, *Die Stundenwachen in den Osirismysterien* (Vienna 1910).

[11] Faulkner, *JEA* 22 (1936) 122.

The initial stanzas of "The Songs" provide instructions for the preparation of the temple and of the two women who would play the parts of Isis and Nephthys. The two women were to be "pure of body and virgin, with the hair of their bodies removed, their heads adorned with wigs, ... tambourines in their hands, and their names inscribed on their arms, to wit Isis and Nephthys, and they shall sing from the stanzas of this book in the presence of this god." There follows a series of recitations by a chief lector, duets by Isis and Nephthys, and solos by Isis. A few stanzas from "The Songs" will illustrate the general tone of all of these hymns of grief. Isis in her first, short solo enunciates her great loss by singing :

I am thy sister Isis, the desire of thine heart,
(Yearning) after thy love whilst thou art far away;
I flood this land (with tears?) to-day.

(3.14-3.16)

Further on she sings another longer, mournfully beautiful solo :

I am a woman beneficial to her brother,
Thy wife, thy sister by thine (own) mother;
Come thou to me quickly,
Since I desire to see thy face after not having seen thy face ...
My heart is hot at thy wrongful separation; ...
I yearn for thy love toward me.
Come! Be not alone! Be not far off! ...
I hid me in the bulrushes to conceal thy son in order to avenge thee,
Because it is a very evil state of affairs, the being far from thee,
And it is not fitting for thy flesh ...
Hot are the hearts of myriads of persons,
Great sorrow (?) is among the gods.

(6.27-7.23)

In "The Songs" as opposed to "The Lamentations" Nephthys plays a minor role. She has no solo piece but appears frequently as a duettist with Isis, as in the following short chant :

Draw nigh, so please you, to us;
We miss (?) life through lack of thee.
Come thou in peace, O our Lord, that we may see thee,
O Sovereign, come in peace,
Drive trouble (?) from out of our house,
Consort thou with us after the manner of a male.

(3.17-3.22)

The entire interchange of solos, duets, and recitations demonstrates one of the chief roles in which Isis was cast by the Egyptians. At this period she was subordinate in significance and popularity to Osiris. Her chief duty was to lament his death and seek to revive him by meticulous care for his body. In this enactment of the myth, she relates repeatedly her yearning for him, tells how she has sought him out on a long journey, and pleads for his return to her. Consequently, both Osiris and Isis were at that time primarily gods of death, a sphere especially important to the Egyptians.

There is every indication that the rites and doctrines that Plutarch described in *De Iside et Osiride* are those which characterised the cult as it was practised in Egypt. The most striking evidence of this is the prominence of Osiris in Plutarch's account and the minor roles played by Sarapis and Isis. Such prominence is in opposition to the complete dominance of Sarapis in Greek cult centers[12] and to the supremacy of Isis in the Roman cult. It can be concluded that the role played by Osiris relates to his position in the Pharaonic cult.[13] Moreover, in calendrical references to festivals and customs, Plutarch's use of neither Greek nor Roman terminology strengthens the conclusion that his concern was with the cult in Egypt.[14] The cult in Egypt, however, particularly as practised by the Greeks residing there, had absorbed by this time several features of the Greek religion, especially in regard to the mysteries, and these are in evidence in Plutarch's account.

The mythological account given by Plutarch in chapters 12-20 (355D-358E) is generally in harmony with the native Egyptian mythology, disagreeing occasionally in details.[15] Plutarch begins by relating the birth of Osiris, Aroueris (the elder Horus), Typhon, Isis, and Nephthys on each of the five epagomenal days. Their mother was Rhea, and their father was variously one of her three consorts, Helius, Hermes, or Cronus.

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[12] Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis* 13, in a study of the inscriptions, prefers to refer to this difference in a chronological respect : "in der hellenistischen Zeit kommt Osiris sehr sporadisch, in der römischen häufiger vor .... Aber in allgemeinen wird Osiris auch in der römischen Zeit nur selten genannt, insgesamt in 20 sowohl lateinischen als auch griechischen Inschriften, vor allem in der westlichen Hälfte des Imperiums."

[13] Griffiths 45-46.

[14] *Ibid.*, 67.

[15] *Ibid.*, 53.

Nephthys married Typhon, and Isis and Osiris loved each other before they were born, having united with each other in the womb. In Osiris's absence while he was civilizing the world, Typhon conspired against him. Having prepared a beautiful chest, Typhon lured Osiris into lying in it, shut the lid and bolted it, and cast the chest into the river.[16] When Isis heard of the incident, she cut off a lock of her hair[17] and put on mourning garments; this is why, says Plutarch, the city where the incident occurred is called Coptos (from *κόπτω*). Wandering about in a state of distress (*ἀποροῦσαν*), she inquired of everyone she met whether he had seen the chest. In the midst of her wanderings she discovered that Osiris had been intimate with Nephthys; the fruit of that union, Anubis, became her guardian and attendant. Then she learned that the chest had been cast up at Byblos on a heath-tree which had grown rapidly and concealed it, and that the tree was now used as a pillar in the king's house. Isis journeyed to Byblos,[18] dejected and tearful (*ταπεινὴν καὶ δεδακρυμένην*). After acquainting herself with the queen's maids, she gained entry to the king's house as nurse of his child. At night, she turned herself into a swallow and flew about the pillar in loud lament (*θρηνεῖν*). When the queen discovered her, Isis finally revealed herself and her mission and asked for the pillar. Having given special treatment to the wood and entrusting it to the king's keeping, she threw herself on the coffin in grief. So loud was her wail that the younger son of the king died at the sound.[19] Taking the older son of the king with her, she found a secluded spot where she opened the chest and mournfully caressed the body of Osiris.[20] The king's son angered her so by watching the incident that one look from her frightened him to death. Then, she returned to

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[16] The Egyptian sources contain no trace of the Greek tradition that Osiris was lured into a chest to die although the casting of the chest into the river may be an echo of the Egyptian version of drowning. Anne Burton, *Diodorus Siculus, Book I. A Commentary* (Leiden 1972) 60.

[17] The cutting of a lock of hair in mourning is a Greek custom not found in Pharaonic Egypt. Griffiths 54, 314-15.

[18] Plutarch is the earliest extant source for the Byblos episode. For a discussion of this see Griffiths 54, 319-22.

[19] *τῇ δὲ σορῷ περιπεσεῖν καὶ κωκῦσαι τηλικοῦτον, ὥστε τῶν παίδων τοῦ βασιλέως τὸν νεώτερον ἐκθανεῖν.*

[20] ... *αὐτὴν καθ' ἑαυτὴν γενομένην ἀνοῖξαι τὴν λάρνακα καὶ τῷ προσώπῳ τὸ πρόσωπον ἐπιθεῖσαν ἀσπάσασθαι καὶ δακρύειν.* Plu., *DIO* 17 (357D).

her infant son Horus, who, as we learn later, was born, prematurely and weak in the lower limbs, of the posthumous union of Osiris and Isis, and was now hidden away in Buto. Meanwhile, Isis had set the coffin aside, and it was soon discovered by Typhon who cut the body into fourteen parts and scattered them everywhere. All but the genitals were eventually found and buried by Isis who sailed through the marshes on a papyrus boat searching for them. Subsequently, Osiris came from the underworld and sought his revenge by training Horus for battle with Typhon in which venture Horus was successful.

So we see from the complete treatment of the Osirian myth in Plutarch that even many centuries after the composition of the solos and duets chanted at the performances of the sufferings of Osiris, Isis was still portrayed as a sorrowful mourner who searched tirelessly for her husband's body. In Plutarch's account, however, it is to be noted that Nephthys did not participate in the mourning ritual; rather, the burden belonged to Isis alone. "Nor did she allow the contests and struggles which she had undertaken, her wanderings and her many deeds of wisdom and bravery, to be engulfed in oblivion and silence, but into the most sacred rites she infused images, suggestions and representations of her experiences at that time, and so she consecrated at once a pattern of piety and an encouragement to men and women overtaken by similar misfortunes."[21] Thus, Isis as mourner came to be imitated in festivals everywhere in Egypt,[22] and eventually in Greece and Rome, too.

Before the Graeco-Roman era these funerary functions were the dominant ones associated with Isis. More important in the spread of her cult outside of Egypt, however, were Isis's functions as wife and mother, and, thus, the portrayal of Isis, Osiris, and Horus as a family unit. Although Isis is also called the sister of Osiris by Plutarch, nonetheless, from the very beginning of his account her role as wife is emphasized. She and Osiris had already united sexually in their mother's womb. Her devotion to Osiris and her anguish at his loss are expressed in her long search for him and in her repeated wails of grief so powerful as to cause disastrous results. This grief grew out of her deep wifely love for Osiris. Even when she learned of Osiris's adulterous relationship

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[21] Plu., *DIO* 27 (361D-E); Griffiths' translation.

[22] See, for example, Herodotus 2.61, and for Greece, Diodorus Siculus 1.14.

with Nephthys resulting in the birth of Anubis, she was not deterred from her mournful journey, but instead brought Anubis up as her own child and took him as her attendant. If Diodorus Siculus (1.27) is to be believed, the Egyptians took the marriage of Isis and Osiris as a basis for their own marriage laws.[23] Contrary to the rest of mankind, they permitted the marriage of brothers and sisters since the marriage of Isis to her own brother had been so successful.[24] As verification of this success Diodorus calls attention to a vow that Isis took after Osiris's death never to marry another man. She avenged the murder of her husband and then became the source of more blessings for men as she reigned over the land. For this reason, the story goes, the queen in Egypt had more power than the king, and husbands gave obeisance to their wives.

Plutarch relates that Euxodus called Isis the arbiter in matters of sexual love (*DIO* 52 [372D]). Although she was eventually identified with Hathor, goddess of sexual love in Egypt, and later with Aphrodite, in contrast to these goddesses, Isis represented sexuality only within the bounds of wifely fidelity which she perfectly embodied. G. Michaïlides in a

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[23] Marriage oaths for Greeks in the Fayum mention Osiris, Isis, and Horus. Cf. Brady, *Reception* 37 and Griffiths 42 n. 1 who specifically mentions PSI 64, 1-3 dating from 116/15 B.C. See also P. Perdrizet, TC *Fouquet* 2 : "les contrats de mariage de l'Égypte greco-romaine révèlent qu'une image d'Isis-Aphrodite faisait généralement partie des paraphernaux." According to Dunand, *Le culte d'Isis* 1.81 n. 2, a certain number of papyri attest the mention of statuettes of Aphrodite in contracts of marriage or similar documents.

[24] But see Burton, *Diodorus Siculus* 111, who says that "contrary to popular belief, consanguineous marriage was not particularly common in Egypt. During the pharaonic period marriage between brothers and sisters appears to have occurred almost exclusively within royal families, and was presumably undertaken for dynastic reasons. The evidence for such marriages outside the royal family during this period has been collected by Cerný, 'Consanguineous Marriages in Pharaonic Egypt,' *JEA*, XL, 1954, 23-29, who concludes that it was possible but not common ... For the Graeco-Roman period there is definite evidence in the papyri of non-royal consanguineous marriages. In fact consanguineous marriage seems to have been yet more common in the Roman than in the Ptolemaic period and extended to other relationships than that of full brother and sister ... The practice was presumably not inherited from pharaonic Egypt, but became established in the Graeco-Roman period, possibly in imitation of the consanguineous marriages of the Ptolemies."

For a funerary stela found in Egypt on which is depicted a woman in Isiac garb nursing her infant who apparently has married her brother see V. Tran Tam Tinh with Yvette Labrecque, *Isis lactans* (Leiden 1973) 29-30.

recent study[25] has shown that in spite of the many roles Isis played (healer, goddess of heaven in association with the star of Sothis and the moon, principle of fertility, mistress of all land and sea, dispenser of justice, possessor of magical power, etc.), her dominant trait was her loving devotion to Osiris and her motherly love for Horus.

It was especially as mother that Isis touched the hearts of the faithful. She came at the end of a long development of mother-goddesses and was the most humanized of these goddesses. Sculpturally, she was most frequently portrayed with the child Horus.[26] Michaïlides[27] points out that while conjugal love is the product of a rather late civilization, maternal love is found among the earliest people. In its primitive state maternal love closely approaches animality, but in Isis it was spiritualized into its definitive form. Benevolence and tenderness characterized all of her relationships. In a hymn of praise she was called "affectionate" *φιλόστοργον*) and "the provider of sweetness in assemblies" (*τὴν ἐν ταῖς συνόδοις ἡδίας εὐπορίαν*).[28] Gentle and placable was the favor of her two commands.[29] Her emotions were very human ones—love, loyalty, sorrow, compassion—and it was her human qualities with which the ordinary man could identify and which caused her widespread popularity.

Mythologically, then, Isis was mourner, wife, and mother, and all that these functions implied. Most certainly she had possessed many other attributes in ancient Egypt, and she acquired new attributes as she made her way into the Greek and Roman world, but the essence of her being was inherent in these roles. "Isis in the Graeco-Roman world was above all else the faithful wife and indeed the divine patroness of family life and instructress in such domestic arts as weaving and spinning ... She was esteemed as the model spouse ... The tale of Isis and Osiris, whatever the discrepancies of detail, could serve as the pattern of family bonds of affection."[30]

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[25] Michaïlides, "Contribution à l'étude de la grande déesse en Égypte, II, Isis déesse de l'amour," *Bulletin de l'Institut d'Égypte* 37 (1956) 191-213.

[26] On such portrayals see H. W. Müller, "Isis mit dem Horuskinde," *Münchner Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst* 14 (1963) 7-38, and Tran Tam Tinh and Labrecque, *Isis lactans.*

[27] Michaïlides, *BIE* 37 (1956) 200.

[28] P. Oxy. 1380.130-32.

[29] *Ibid.*, 155-57 : *ἠπεία σοῦ καὶ εὐδιάλλακτος ἡ χάρις τῶν δύο προσταγμάτων.*

[30] Witt, *Isis* 41.

Isis designates herself specifically as patroness of women in the aretalogies, a series of closely-related, Greek hymns celebrating the goddess in her various functions.[31] She appears in these hymns predominantly, but not at all exclusively, as the goddess of women. A good deal of controversy still surrounds the Memphite archetype on which these hymns are based, despite recent studies by D. Müller[32] and J. Bergman.[33] The central point of discussion is the language in which the original was written. Closely connected with this problem is the question of the essential characteristics of Isis when her cult spread throughout the Mediterranean region. Was she at her first exit from Egypt all that the aretalogies implied or did these characteristics accrue as she entered foreign lands? R. Harder,[34] following whose publication the bulk of the controversy began, concluded, while attempting to demonstrate that the hymns were Egyptian in composition and ideas, that all of the texts went back to an Egyptian original later translated into Greek. His thesis was vigorously rejected by A. D. Nock[35] and A. J. Festugière.[36] Festugière set up his own series of proofs in opposition to Harder, demonstrating that the hymns contained many Greek ideas as well as Egyptian and that they displayed an order of composition harmonious with the Greek mind. Thus, he concluded, there was no

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[31] Among the finds at Maronée is a stela with a new hymn to Isis. Judging by the writing Yves Grandjean has dated it in the first century A.D. In addition to the usual praises of Isis the aretalogy contains two more original portions : 1) the birth section of the hymn reveals an intense interest on the part of the author in Athens; 2) in the first section of the hymn the author explains why he is writing the praises of Isis. It was Isis to whom he had prayed for a recovery from an eye disease, and his prayers had been granted. A preliminary report on the work of Yves Grandjean (*Une nouvelle arétalogie d'Isis à Maronée*) is given by Louis Robert in *Comptes Rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions* (1971) 532-35.

[32] D. Müller, *Ägypten und die griechischen Isis-Aretalogien* (Berlin 1961).

[33] J. Bergman, *Ich bin Isis* (*Acta Univ. Uppsal.* : *Historia Religionum* 3) (Uppsala 1968).

[34] R. Harder, *Karpokrates von Chalkis und die memphitische Isispropaganda* (Berlin 1944). Before this time most scholars agreed that the hymns were literal translations from the Egyptian. Cf. P. Foucart, *Les mystères d'Eleusis* (Paris 1914) 72; W. Wittmann, *Das Isisbuch des Apuleius* (Stuttgart 1938) 141.

[35] A. D. Nock in his review of R. Harder, *Karpokrates* in *Gnomon* 21 (1949) 221 ff.

[36] A. J. Festugière, "À propos des arétalogies d'Isis," *HThR* 42 (1949) 209-234.

need for an Egyptian archetype; the original was Greek. Martin Nilsson,[37] taking a somewhat neutral ground, noted that the whole tenor of the texts displayed adaptation to Greek representations, while the details were Egyptian. He cautioned the reader to recognize that Egyptianizing could creep in not only from a translation but also through composition by an individual who spoke Egyptian but wrote Greek. The problem awaited further investigation and detailed analysis by a scholar who was familiar with both the Egyptian and the Greek languages. An Egyptologist, Dieter Müller, recently approached the problem with a great deal of precision, interestingly enough attempting to find the exact Egyptian equivalent for each statement of the hymn in the process of relating it to Egyptian or Greek sources.[38] He concluded that the archetype was of Greek origin, although he demonstrated that just less than half of the attributes of Isis in the aretalogies could derive from Egyptian sources, Graecized though they might be in form. The Egyptianizing elements may be explained in various ways, but Müller is inclined to believe, in view of what he terms the basic Greek attitude of the aretalogies, that a Greek Isis-priest who had access to the written documents of the Egyptian religion either through collaboration with an Egyptian colleague or through a knowledge of the language, composed the archetype from which came the hymns of Cyme, Ios, Andros, Saloniki, and the hymn in Diodorus Siculus.[39] On the other hand, J. Bergman

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[37] M. Nilsson, *Geschichte der Griechischen Religion*, 2, *Die Hellenistische und Römische Zeit* (Munich 1950) 600-603. Nilsson gives an extensive critical bibliography for the aretalogies, 600 n. 2.

[38] Müller, *Ägypten*. Müller in his systematic approach uses the letter M, proposed by Harder, to designate the reconstructed archetype from Memphis.

[39] The texts of the hymns of Cyme, Ios, Andros, and the related hymns of Cyrene and of Mesomedes and the Anubis-hymn from Cios are found in W. Peek, *Der Isishymnus von Andros und verwandte Texte* (Berlin 1930). The texts also appear in the following places : the hymn of Cyme : A. Salač, "Inscriptions de Kymé d'Éolide, de Phocée, de Tralles," *BCH* 51 (1927) 378-83; P. Roussel, "Un nouvel hymne grec à Isis," *REG* 42 (1929) 137-68; P.G. Walsh, *The Roman Novel* (Cambridge 1970) 252-53; the hymn of Ios : IG 12.5.14; the hymn of Andros : IG 12.5.739. The text of the fragmentary inscription of Saloniki is found in Harder, *Karpokrates* along with the related hymn of Karpokrates. Diodorus 1.27 reproduces a portion of an inscription which is closely related to the archetype. For a commentary on this see Burton, *Diodorus Siculus* 114-16. For the hymn of Mesomedes see A. Delatte, "Deux nouveaux hymnes hellénistiques," *Musée Belge* 17 (1913) 135-44. An Isis aretalogy is preserved

another Egyptologist, has directed attention to the general Egyptian background from which the aretalogies resulted; in opposition to Müller, he emphasized that this background was Egyptian, not Greek. It is surprising to see Müller, who pointed out many elements characteristic of Egyptian thought and composition in the aretalogies, coming to conclusions so heavily in favor of a Greek origin.[40] In the face of so much that could be referred to Egyptian sources, Müller (p. 8) seems to contradict himself by agreeing with G. Vandebeek[41] that Egypt contributed little more to the image of Isis than the name and motives. On the other hand, an Egyptianizing background does not conclusively prove that the original was written in Egyptian. The problem of the language of the archetype has not yet been solved with any degree of certainty.

Nor is there absolute agreement about the date of the composition of the original. The oldest extant version of the aretalogy is the hexametric hymn of Andros which stems from the first century B.C. To nearly the same period belongs the text handed down in Diodorus 1.27, said by the author to be part of a longer inscription, the remainder of which was illegible. The dating of these two versions has encouraged scholars to place the composition of the original in the second or third century B.C.[42] Most recently, Vidman,[43] dating the Andros hymn at the end of the first century B.C., has stated that, in his opinion, the original is not much older than the first century B.C.

General agreement, however, does surround the thesis that the author of the aretalogy wished to popularize Isis among the Greeks. Such a purpose involved creating an image of the goddess that would appeal to the Greek spirit. Indeed, the Isis who so captivated the ancient world after making her way from Egypt was the product of an intermingling of characteristics, many of them gained through the process of syncretism. Of immediate interest in the aretalogies is the manner in which

in Stob., *Ecl. phys.* 1. For the four Isis hymns of Isidore from Medinet Madi see SEG 8.2.548-551. Finally, of importance here also is the Isis hymn of P. Oxy. 1380.

[40] Müller, *Ägypten* 8, 86-87, 911.

[41] G. Vandebeek, *De Interpretatio Graeca van de Isis figuur* (Louvain 1946).

[42] Festugière, *HThR* 42 (1949) 233, says it belongs perhaps to the beginning of the third century B.C. Harder, *Karpokrates* 51 and n. 7, believed the original went back to the second century B.C. or perhaps even to the time of the first Ptolemy.

[43] Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis* 126 n. 7.

Isis is represented, or rather represents herself through a series of self-predications, many beginning with the formula "I am". Near the very beginning of the aretalogy (M6)[44] she states what is already known about her from the myth: *Ἐγώ εἰμι γυνὴ καὶ ἀδελφὴ Ὀσείριδος βασιλέως*. There follows (M8) a statement of her relationship to Horus : *Ἐγώ εἰμι μήτηρ Ὥρου βασιλέως*. Having given her family background, she begins in M10 to state facts that are not directly known from the myth. She announces herself as goddess of women : *Ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ παρὰ γυναιξὶ θεὸς καλουμένη*. Müller[45] has indicated that the Egyptian equivalent of this title was applied to four Egyptian goddesses, Hathor and Isis among them, who were primarily goddesses of fertility and birth. Isis, then, was the protectress of these exclusively female functions. It was she whom women could invoke for help in any aspect of these processes or in concerns of domestic life. According to the litany of P. Oxy. 1380. 130-31, she was the ornament of the female sex : *κόσμον θηλειῶν*. She had also introduced the arts of spinning and weaving,[46] arts that she and Nephthys had used, according to Egyptian texts, to make garments for Osiris.[47] Moreover, Isis has been portrayed in the myth as a model wife and mother with very human emotions. It was natural for women to identify with her, and they did much more so than they could with Diana, who was primarily a chaste virgin and had little to do with domestic life, or with Venus, whose sphere of interest was rather sexual or romantic love than married love or female functions. In Isis women found a goddess who was essentially their own.

Proceeding from her proclamation that she was patroness of women, Isis in her aretalogy gives several specific reasons why women especially owed her homage and looked to her for protection. It was she who had brought man and woman together : *Ἐγὼ γυναῖκα καὶ ἄνδρα συνήγαγον* (M17). Or as P. Oxy. 1380.146-48 more graphically expresses it, it was her will that men and women should anchor together : *σὺ καὶ τὰς σώας γυναῖκας ἀνδράσι συνορμισθῆναι θέλις*. This reference to her concern with sexual life was developed through her identification with Hathor and Aphrodite-Venus. Particularly in the eyes of women was Isis the

[44] Cf. n. 38 *supra*.

[45] Müller, *Ägypten* 35.

[46] P. Oxy. 1380.145-46 : *ἐπὶ νοεῖς καὶ τὰ . . ν.θωτα ὑφῆναι*.

[47] Drexler, "Isis," 459.

goddess, as were Hathor and Aphrodite-Venus, who united the sexes in love and perpetuated human life. Her identification with Hathor is visible in those representations in which she wears a cow's horns or head or appears entirely in the form of a cow.[48] Plutarch (*DIO* 19 [358D]) attempted to explain this Hathor-form by having Isis receive a cow headdress from Hermes. The horns were interpreted by many authors as the crescent moon,[49] although there is no evidence that she was connected with the moon in Egypt;[50] thus, Plutarch says (*DIO* 52 [372D]) that the moon is summoned for help in love affairs. The Greeks saw in Isis-Hathor their own goddess Aphrodite, and subsequently identified Isis with Aphrodite. From an early time the cult of Isis-Aphrodite was in evidence at Alexandria, at Delos, and in many villages of Egypt and Greece.[51] A certain inscription from Perinthus, for example, in which Artemidorus, a priest, made a dedication to Isis-Aphrodite, dates, in the opinion of some scholars, from the third or fourth century B.C.[52] An inscription from Delos was set up by two specific groups of devotees, the melanephori and the therapeutai, to Isis Aphrodite at the end of the second century B.C.,[53] and two additional inscriptions from Delos are to Isis Aphrodite Dikaia.[54] In P. Oxy. 1380 Isis is said to have been called Aphrodite at Aphroditopolis, Nithine, Hermopolis, Heliopolis, Leuce Acte, and at M...enestium. Numerous statues, in the majority of which the female figure is nude, depict Isis with the characteristics of Aphrodite and Venus.[55] Apuleius could address her as the Venus who brought

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[48] *Ibid.*, 453 ff. See Witt, *Isis* pl. 2, for a Hellenistic statue of Isis-Hathor. See also J. Bergman, *Isis-Seele und Osiris-Ei. Zwei ägyptologische Studien zu Diodorus Siculus I 27, 4-5* (Uppsala 1970) 24, who states that the connection between Hathor and Isis was so close that even at Dendera, the chief cult center of Hathor, it is very difficult to distinguish whether Hathor or Isis is named in a text or represented in an image.

[49] Plu., *DIO* 52 (372D); Diod. Sic. 1.11.1; Macr., *Sat.* 1.21.11-12; Firm. Mat., *Err. prof. rel.* 8; Diog. Laert., *Prooem.* 10; Eus., *Praep. evang.* 3.26; Stat., *Theb.* 1.717 ff.; Apul., *Met.* 11.24. For her further identification with the moon in the form of Selene see Drexler, "Isis," 437 f.

[50] Griffiths 501.

[51] Tran Tam Tinh, *Essai* 83.

[52] VS 128.

[53] VS CE 151.

[54] VS CE 161 and 162.

[55] Drexler, "Isis," 494 ff. For a statue of Isis-Aphrodite anadyomene see Malaise, *Inventaire* Roma 333, p. 179-80. On the same statue see A. Gotsmich, "Die Venus

together male and female and so eternally propagated mankind.[56] In this aspect of her character sexual love was her sphere of influence although, as has been noted, it was predominantly married love over which she held sway. In this respect she stood in contrast to those goddesses with whom she was identified. As evidence of her interest in the permanent relationship between man and woman, Isis in the aretalogy also claimed to have founded marriage contracts : *Ἐγὼ συγγραφὰς γαμικὰς εὗρον* (M30). In this regard she was sometimes mentioned in marriage contracts and would later appear in the Greek romances as a witness to marriage vows.[57]

Closely connected with M17 is M27 : *Ἐγὼ στέργεσθαι γυναῖκας ὑπ' ἀνδρῶν ἠνάγκασα*. Here Isis repeats her claim that it was she who brought man and woman together. Harder[58] denied that this statement had any connection with sexual life, but he was proven incorrect by Festugière.[59]

Furthermore, Isis had imposed the act of childbearing on women and created the institution of parenthood : *Ἐγὼ γυναιξὶ δεκαμηνιαῖον βρέφος εἰς φῶς ἐξενεγκεῖν ἔταξα* (M18); *Ἐγὼ ὑπὸ τέκνων γονεῖς φιλοστοργεῖσθαι ἐνομοθέτησα* (M19). Isis, who was herself the creative principle (Plu., *DIO* 43 [368C]), bestowed fertility and was invoked as a fertility goddess. She had been recognized since early Egyptian times as giver of life for she had given her own husband life after his body had been dismembered, and had, after his death, conceived Horus. The *ankh*, the sign of life in the form of a tau, that she had carried in ancient Egypt still appeared at times in the Graeco-Roman period.[60] Isis in her function of dispenser of life became the protectress of pregnant women. In an Egyptian magical charm a pregnant woman identified herself with Isis and summoned the gods to prepare her couch for confinement, making her order binding by saying that it was Isis and not

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vom Esquilin. Ein Symbol einer west-östlichen Auseinandersetzung in der Antike," *Forschungen und Fortschritte* 25 (1949) 193-95.

[56] Apul., *Met.* 11.2 : seu tu caelestis Venus, quae primis rerum exordiis sexuum diversitatem generato amore sociasti et aeterna subdole humano genere propagato nunc circumfluo Paphi sacrario coleris.

[57] Ach. Tat. 5.14.

[58] Harder, *Karpokrates* 26.

[59] Festugière, *HThR* 42 (1949) 214 f.

[60] Drexler, "Isis," 501.

she who gave it.[61] Isis's connection with the goddess Bubastis is further evidence of her governance over the sphere of the reproductive processes. Bubastis was the Hellenized form of the Egyptian goddess Bastet, among whose essential functions were her roles as protectress of women and goddess of maternity. In Herodotus she appeared especially as a fertility goddess.[62] The relationship of the two goddesses vacillated between identification and mere association.[63] The Isiac aretalogy of P. Oxy. 1380.3-5, for example, states that in one particular city, whose name is illegible, Isis was called Bubastis. On the other hand, several Graeco-Egyptian terra cotta figurines depict the gestures of women, many of whom wore an Isiac crown, at festivals of Bubastis.[64] Some of these figurines represent nude women, squatting or sitting, carrying an amulet as did Isis, indicating that protection was sought by pregnant women from Isis.[65] Other terra cottas represent a type of Isis-Aphrodite-Bubastis designated by the epithet ἀνασυρμένη. The goddess, wearing a calathos adorned with the Isiac crown, lifts her tunic up with both hands, a gesture typical of rituals of fertility.[66]

Isis also claimed to have caused parents to be loved by their children. Of interest in this regard is the statement attributed by Plutarch to Horus in response to a question by Osiris as to what he considered to be the finest action. With pride he heard Horus respond, "τῶ πατρὶ καὶ τῇ μητρὶ τιμωρεῖν κακῶς παθοῦσι". The child Horus, was, then, a perfect example of filial devotion. Furthermore, Isis threatened to punish those who were unkind to their parents : Ἐγὼ τοῖς ἀστόργως γονεῦσι διακειμένοις τειμωρίαν ἐπέθηκα. A strong sense of family loyalty marked the relationship of Osiris, Isis, and Horus, serving to popularize the cult particularly as a family cult. Illustrative of Horus's fidelity as a son are his Egyptian epithets *ỉwn mwt .f*, 'pillar of his

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[61] *Ibid.*, 502.

[62] Hdt. 2.137, 156.

[63] F. Dunand, "Une 'interpretatio romana' d'Isis : Isis, déesse des naissances," *REL* 40 (1962) 83-86; VS 67; Bergman, *Isis-Seele und Osiris-Ei* 24-25, 67, n. 1.

[64] Dunand, *REL* 40 (1962) 84 f.

[65] *Ibid.*

[66] Dunand, *Le culte d'Isis* 1.85 and n. 3. In this connection see Hdt. 2.60 in his description of the *Bubastia* : while the men played flutes and clapped their hands, the women danced and lifted up their dresses.

mother," and *nḏ it .f*, "saviour of his father."[67] Griffiths[68] points out an instance of the parallelism between the Osirian family and the human family in the Kanaïs inscriptions, 30 : "As for any one who will ignore this decree, Osiris will pursue him, and Isis his wife, and Horus his children."[69] The strong family unit created thus served as a model for the faithful who were attracted by the very human aspects of the Isiac religion.

It is in the Oxyrhynchus hymn that Isis, perhaps one of the first advocates of women's liberation, is attributed with having given to women power equal to that of men : σὺ γυναιξὶν ἴσην δύναμιν τῶν ἀνδρῶν ἐποίησας (214-16). This seems to be a sort of summation of all of her other activities on behalf of women. In a sense it was because of all of her aforementioned gifts to women that she had made the power of women equal to that of men. More important was the fact that women now had a goddess who presided over functions specifically their own, whom they could invoke in times of trouble, and whose life was something to be emulated by every woman. In this way women could practise religion on an equal basis with men.

In summation, from the earliest times Isis seems to have been portrayed first as a mourner at the death of her brother-husband Osiris. More important in her spread throughout the Graeco-Roman world were her roles as the loving wife of Osiris and the devoted mother of Horus. These very human aspects of her character endeared her particularly to that class of society whose concerns revolved around domestic life.

The aretalogies, a series of Greek hymns in praise of Isis, depict her primarily, though not exclusively, as goddess of women. In the hymns she claims herself as the one called goddess by women, the one who brought man and woman together; it was she who established marriage contracts, who caused women to be loved by men, who gave women the ability to bear children, and who established the parent-child relationship. Finally, she gave women power equal to that of men thereby establishing herself supremely as goddess of women.

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[67] Griffiths 345.

[68] *Ibid.*

[69] Cf. the inscription from Chalcis published by R. Harder, *Karpokrates* = VS 88.7 in which Harpocrates claims to preside over the upbringing of children.

CHAPTER THREE

ISIS AS PERCEIVED BY WOMEN IN THE GRAECO-ROMAN WORLD

The character of Isis was remarkably persistent throughout the many centuries and in the many locations in which she was worshiped. Her sculptured form changed, of course, from the rigid Egyptian figure to the more graceful and refined goddess of Hellenistic art. She was assimilated to numerous goddesses in function, form, and name through the process of syncretism. But the role she played in the myth and what she claimed to be in her aretalogies comprised her basic nature, and it was this nature that attracted the allegiance of women in the Graeco-Roman world. A multitude of other reasons may have caused women to look to Isis for assistance, but basically it was because she had established herself as patroness of the female sex[1] and offered herself as a model of inspiration in the circumstances of domestic life. In the natural but momentous occurrences of living common to all of mankind protection was sought through identification with the goddess. Among these occurrences was death, particularly in two aspects : the mourning that accompanied death, and the concerns of life after death.

Isis had already established her claim over the sphere of death when she became united with Osiris, the god of the dead, toward the end of the development of the Egyptian religion. She became more directly associated with death through the myth that portrayed her as the mournful sister and widow of Osiris. The memorialization of her struggles and wanderings had begun at an early period in Egypt with the dramatization of the death and resurrection of Osiris, and of the search for and discovery of him by Isis. Mention has already been made[2] of an inscription from Ikhernofret indicating that the Osirian rites at Abydos were at least as old as the Middle Kingdom. Similar to a medieval passion play, the rites at that time were simply an enactment of scenes from

[1] VS 761 = CIL 2.3386, an inscription from Spain, was dedicated to her as protectress of women under the name *puellaris*.

[2] See p. 38 *supra*.

Osiris's life and death. The series of hymns in "The Songs of Isis and Nephthys" preserve a portion of the dialogue used in the presentation of this drama. It is noteworthy that at this early date women already played a major part in these ceremonies, Isis and Nephthys being portrayed by two virgin priestesses. The rites involved in the celebration of Osiris's death and resurrection eventually took on a more symbolic meaning as evidenced in the Denderah texts and in Plutarch.[3] In the month of Athyr, according to Plutarch (*DIO* 39 [366E-F]), when the Nile had completely receded, the priests covered a gilded cow with a black linen garment such that it represented the mourning Isis.[4] Seven times the cow was led around the temple of the sun (Plu., *DIO* 52 [372C]). On the third day of the rites, at night, the priests went down to the sea and took out a sacred box inside of which was a golden casket. Into the casket they poured water, and everyone there shouted, "Osiris has been found!" Then mixing fertile earth with water, precious spices, and incense, they formed a crescent-shaped image and clothed it, to signify their belief that Isis and Osiris were the principles of earth and water. This description of the ceremony confirms that of Herodotus (2.132) who speaks of a cow, covered with a purple robe such that only the head and neck, which were encrusted with a thick layer of gold, were visible. The cow was brought out of its chamber only once a year when the Egyptians lamented a god whom Herodotus could not name.

The fourth-century A.D. calendar of Philocalus indicates that at Rome the days from October 28 to November 1 were set aside for a feast called the *Isia*.[5] This was most certainly the celebration of Osiris's death and resurrection. There is no full description in ancient literature of these holy days as there is of the other great Isiac festival, the *navigium Isidis* (Apul., *Met.* 11), consequently, little is known of the precise nature of the solemnities at Rome. Basically, they involved an imitation of the lamentation of Isis, of her search for the parts of Osiris's corpse, and of her joy at finding him. Of immediate interest here is the mural on the

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[3] Griffiths 63.

[4] Plu., *DIO* 52 (372D) mentions statues of Isis with black clothes. For a statue of Isis with black vestments see Lafaye, *Histoire du culte*, # 51. Completely black statues are mentioned by Drexler, "Isis," 469.

[5] H. Stern, "La date de la fête d'Isis du mois de novembre à Rome," *CRAI* (1968) 43-50, would extend the feast to November 3.

northwest wall of the sacrarium of the temple of Isis at Pompeii.[6] The scene there depicts the discovery of Osiris. A female figure with long black hair and a lotus flower on her head stands in the first of two boats. She holds a rope that is attached to the second boat. In the second boat is quite a large box on which is painted a bird with black wings. Presumably, then, an actual search did take place, the corpse of the discovered Osiris being returned by boat. A marble base from Faesulae shows an image of Isis mourning Osiris,[7] but provides no conclusive information as to the specifics of the ceremony. The rites must have been similar to those described by Firmicus Maternus, who speaks of annual periods of mourning when shorn Egyptian devotees pretended to seek out the remains of Osiris's body, all the time bewailing him, striking their breasts, wounding their arms, and cutting away the scars of old wounds.[8] Corresponding to this is the description in Minucius Felix (*Octavius* 23.1) where Minucius tells of miserable votaries beating their breasts and imitating the sorrows of an unhappy mother, and of how the priests rejoiced when Osiris was found. These rites seem to have made a deep impression on the Roman mind; there are many references to them in Latin literature.[9] Pagan and Christian writers alike viewed as a great source of amusement the annual renewal of the search for and discovery of Osiris, particularly scorning the great rejoicing that followed the discovery and the repetitiveness of the whole ceremony. Ovid mocked this religious rite, speaking of Osiris who was never sufficiently sought for,[10] and Juvenal followed suit in a satiric reference to what Egypt

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[6] Tran Tam Tinh, *Essai* 143-44, #47 (Pl. X.1).

[7] VS 564=CIL 11.1544.

[8] Firm. Mat., *Err. prof. rel.* 2.3 : Haec est Isiaci sacri summa : in adytis habent idolum Osiridis sepultum; hoc annuis luctibus plangunt, radunt capita, ut miserandum regis sui turpitudine dehonestati defleant capitis, tundunt pectus, lacerant lacertos, veterum vulnerum resecant cicatrices, ut annuis luctibus in animis eorum funestae ac miserandae necis exitium renascatur. Et cum haec certis diebus fecerint, tunc fingunt se lacerati corporis reliquias quaerere, et cum invenerint, quasi sopitis luctibus gaudent.

[9] Tib. 1.7.28; Tert., *Adv. marc.* 1.13.5; Firm. Mat., *Err. prof. rel.* 2.6, 2.9,27.1-2; Lact., *Div. inst.* 1.21; Arn., *Nat.* 1.36; Serv., *Aen.* 6.154; Rut. Nam., *De red. suo* 1.375-76; Prud., *C. Symm.* 1.624-31; Paulinus of Nola, *Carmina* 19.110-30.

[10] Ov., *Met.* 9.693 : numquam satis Osiris quaesitus.

shouted when Osiris was found.[11] St. Augustine[12] tells us that Seneca in his lost work *De superstitione* made great fun of the fact that there was great moaning when Osiris was lost and great rejoicing when he was found, and that the people genuinely grieved and rejoiced though they had lost nothing. To this he added : *huic tamen furori certum tempus est. Tolerabile est semel anno insanire* ... Seneca's total irreverence toward this aspect of the cult is further evidenced by his use of the ritual words εὑρήκαμεν, συγχαίρωμεν to express the reaction in heaven when Claudius appeared (*Apocolocyntosis* 13). On the other hand, Firmicus Maternus simply attempted to integrate this cry of joy (εὑρήκαμεν, συγχαίρομεν) into the Christian religion, counseling Christians to use it as a sign that they had found the true path of salvation. This portion of the festival surrounding the findings of Osiris was called the *inventio* or the *hilaria* as the calendar of Philocalus designates the festival of November 3.

There is little question that women participated in the *Isia.* In the Egyptian ceremonies at Busiris, where Osiris had long been worshiped, Herodotus had seen thousands of females imitating the mournful wife and mother in pantomime while men and women beat their breasts in grief.[13] That these rites were transferred to Italian soil is certain from Minucius Felix,[14] who, without expressly mentioning female mourners, spoke of the imitation of motherly grief[15] in the old Egyptian rites that had now made their way to Rome : ...*et Isiaci miseri caedunt pectora et dolorem infelicissimae matris imitantur.* Thus, women continued to participate in the Isiac mourning ritual as the religion spread outside of Egypt. The public appearance of women in imitative mourning for Osiris was apparently so familiar a sight in Rome that Statius in his *Silvae* 5.242-45 could refer to it for reasons of comparison :

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[11] Juv., *Sat.* 8.26-30 :

> ... salve Gaetulice, seu tu
> Silanus, quocumque alio de sanguine rarus
> civis et egregius patriae contingis ovanti,
> exclamare libet, populus quod clamat Osiris
> invento.

[12] Aug., *De civitate dei* 6.10.

[13] Hdt. 2.61.

[14] Min. Fel., *Oct.* 23.1.

[15] The ancient authors frequently confused Osiris and Horus and referred to Isis's grief over her dead son rather than her husband.

... te sentit habetque,
te videt et tumulos ortuque obituque salutat,
ut Pharios aliae ficta pietate dolores
Mygdoniosque colunt et non sua funera plorant.

The display of grief involved in the *Isia* was public. While the population at large was acquainted with the myth behind it, those mourners who were initiates seem to have been more intimately bound up with these rites. This was not mere play-acting for them. In some secretive way these rites signified eternal life for those who had been initiated. Although no element of mystery in the true sense of the word was involved in the ancient Egyptian religion, and although the Egyptian ceremonies were comparable to mystery-plays, a participation in which gave no one man advantage over any other,[16] the Greeks, who identified Isis with Demeter, saw in these rites their own mysteries.[17] Under Greek influence true mysteries were introduced into the Isiac ceremonies;[18] initiation, the privilege of which in Egypt was limited to the priesthood, was extended to include the laity too.[19] Initiation, however, was still narrowly limited in the sense that only persons selected by the goddess herself were permitted this honor. The individual would be notified in a dream that Isis desired him or her as her servant; by the same method the priest who was to preside over the initiation would be informed of the upcoming event. These initiates belonged to the highest

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[16] Müller, *Ägypten* 49; also Nock, *Conversion* 39 ; Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis* 126. But cf. Witt, *Isis* 152 who follows C. J. Bleeker, "Initiation in Ancient Egypt," *Numen, Supplem.* 10, 49-58, in believing that religious mysteries were known in ancient Egypt.

[17] Hdt. 2.171 where he speaks of a lake whereon the Egyptians enacted at night the story of the god's sufferings (undoubtedly Osiris's sufferings), a rite which they called μυστήρια. In line with his understanding of the word "mysteries," Herodotus refuses to speak of further details.

[18] The question of how early these mysteries began has been raised and has engendered much controversy. Fraser, *Opusc. Athen.* 3 (1960) 4 n. 1 sees no evidence for them before the Roman period and rejects a Ptolemaic origin. He passes lightly over the Isiac aretalogies in which Isis claims to have pointed out μυήσεις to man (M22). Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis* 126 n. 7 sees in these aretalogical references the first beginnings of true mysteries, thus placing their introduction in the late second or early first century B.C. in accordance with his dating of the original archetype. Dunand, *Le culte d'Isis* 1.65, believes it is impossible to prove with certainty the existence of these mysteries before the Roman period.

[19] Griffiths 392.

class of Isis devotees.[20] In Apuleius's *Metamorphoses* 11, after Lucius's transformation from an ass into a man by the power of Isis, he was called and underwent initiation into the mysteries of Isis. Before the secret rites his body was washed and purified, and he spent ten days in the temple abstaining from meat and wine. Of considerable interest here is the second initiation that Lucius underwent when he had returned to Rome. Though he had been initiated into the mysteries of Isis, he was now to become an initiate of the Osirian mysteries which were of a different order from those of Isis. In preparation Lucius once again abstained from meat for ten days and this time shaved his head before undergoing certain nocturnal ceremonies. A true initiate of Osiris, he must eventually die just as Osiris died, but as Osiris rose from the dead, so also would Lucius be resurrected.[21]

The mistresses of the elegiac poets underwent a somewhat similar period of abstention, though here it was sexual abstention that was emphasized, in preparation for rites that in some instances seemed to include a mournful element. Precisely what part these women played in the rites is difficult to ascertain. There is nothing that specifically indicates they were true initiates. Inscriptions of the first and second centuries A.D. mention only men as having been initiated into the mysteries of the Egyptian gods, whereas women do not appear as initiates in the inscriptions until the third and fourth centuries.[22] Plutarch, however, addresses his treatise on Isis and Osiris to a certain Clea who was consecrated in the Osirian rites by her father and mother.[23] Apuleius, too, makes a case for women initiates before the third century by mentioning women among the throng of initiates at the *navigium Isidis* at Cenchreae.[24] But these examples are somewhat later than the era of the elegiac poets; moreover, the poets say nothing to indicate that their mistresses were involved in mysteries. Their main emphasis is on the ten days of sexual abstention their mistresses had to endure

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[20] Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis* 66.

[21] Firm. Mat., *Err. prof. rel.* 22.3.

[22] Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis* 138.

[23] Plu., *DIO* 35 (364E) : τοῖς δ' Ὀσιριακοῖς καθωσιωμένην ἱεροῖς ἀπὸ πατρὸς καὶ μητρός.

[24] Apul., *Met.* 11.10 : Tunc influunt turbae sacris divinis initiatae, viri feminaeque omnis dignitatis et omnis aetatis linteae vestis candore puro luminosi ...

in honor of the Isiac rites. The ten-day abstinence was something that preceded rather than followed initiation. The spending of nights in the temple of Isis was a common occurrence among Isiac devotees, for Isis was known to appear in dreams and to call future initiates that way. Lucius, for example, in Apuleius's *Metamorphoses* (11.19), after the ceremony of the *navigium Isidis* and his return to human form, hired for himself a room in the temple in order to become more devoted to the goddess. The Roman matron Paulina, as the story goes, also spent a night in the temple at Rome awaiting intercourse with the god Anubis.[25] The practice, then, was not limited to initiates. Moreover, only Tibullus (1.3.29-30) speaks of his mistress as being arrayed in the white linen which is believed to have been, along with the shaven head, a characteristic of Isiac initiates.[26] However, many uninitiated women in the procession down to the sea in the *Metamorphoses* (11.9) wore white vestments, though no mention of linen is made in that place. Delia and Cynthia, then, were most probably ordinary devotees of Isis; but what is of interest here are certain elements that point to their participation in Isiac mourning rites. Tibullus in the midst of a lingering illness begged the aid of Isis with her healing powers. If he were cured, Delia would pay her holy vows :

> ut mea votivas persolvens Delia voces
> ante sacras lino tecta fores sedeat
> bisque die resoluta comas tibi dicere laudes
> insignis turba debeat in Pharia.
> (Tib. 1.3.29-32)

The reference here to the twice-daily singing of praises recalls the morning and evening rites associated with the Isis temple. The phrase *resoluta comas* is of interest insofar as it generally was a characteristic of mourning women.[27] It seems out of place with the daily rituals that included the opening of the temple and the dressing and adoration of the image of Isis in the morning and further contemplation in the late afternoon. Since little is known of the precise character of the afternoon ceremonies, however, it is possible that some sort of dramatic representa-

[25] Joseph., *Ant. iud.* 18.73-74.

[26] Malaise, *Les conditions de pénétration* 144.

[27] Cf. Serv., *Aen.* 3.65 : crinem de more (solutae) aut de more gentis, ut etiam in Aegypto est, aut certe de more plangentium.

tion was presented that involved in some way the myth of Isis and Osiris. Whatever the case, Delia was among the women who were emotionally attracted to the mournful aspect of the religion. Propertius's mistress Cynthia participated in the *tristia sollemnia* too. The poet cursed the sad rites that took Cynthia away from him for ten nights :

> Tristia iam redeunt iterum sollemnia nobis :
> Cynthia iam noctes est operata decem.
> Atque utinam pereant, Nilo quae sacra tepente
> misit matronis Inachis Ausoniis!
> (Prop. 2.33.1-4)

These *tristia sollemnia* were very likely the *Isia* in the public performance of which Cynthia took part.

Isis eventually became a saviour goddess in the essential meaning of the word.[28] Individual redemption could be attained through participation in her mysteries. The belief that immortality could be attained through the Isiac religion was the most persistent of its doctrines.[29] The certainty of an after-life was one of the most attractive features of the religion. One had only to follow the prescriptions of the Egyptian gods as interpreted by their priests to assure himself of a life after death. Women in particular seem to have found great comfort in the redemptive aspects of the religion. The Athenian funerary steles of the first and second centuries A.D.[30] very often represent women wearing the costume and carrying the attributes of Isis. While there is a good deal of uniformity in the gestures and attitudes of these women, their vestments and hairstyles exhibit some variation. There are some common traits, however, characteristic of the Isiac of the imperial period : long hair with a band on the forehead and curls falling on the shoulder, a tunic with narrow sleeves, a mantle with fringe and knot, falling in two pleats in front, a sistrum in the right hand, and a small situla in the left.[31]

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[28] C. J. Bleeker, "Isis as Saviour Goddess," *The Saviour God* (Manchester 1963) 11.

[29] Cumont, *Les religions orientales* 93.

[30] The list of funerary stelas of priestesses or Isiac faithful found in A. Conze, *Die attischen Grabreliefs* (Berlin 1914) is set out in Tran Tam Tinh, *Campanie* 30-31 n. 3 and also in Dunand, *Le culte d'Isis* 2.145-48.

[31] Dunand, *Le culte d'Isis* 2.148.

The phrase "May Osiris give you fresh water" (*δοίη σοι Ὄσιρις τὸ ψυχρὸν ὕδωρ*), in which water signified a blessed after-life,[32] was a popular one on the tombstones of women. In fact, of the five times that this phrase occurred, women are expressly mentioned four times. In three of these inscriptions dedications were made at Rome for dead women.[33] The fourth dedication was made to the memory of a ten-year old child by both of his parents.[34] Another formula indicative of the connection between Osiris and eternal life appears in an inscription from Rome : *Φλαουία Σερουάνδα ἡ καὶ Ἀγριππεῖνα, πανάρετε, εὐψύχι μετὰ τοῦ Ὀσείριδος*.[35] The dead women, devoted in some way to the Egyptian gods, is wished an eternal life with Osiris. The calm acceptance of death by Isiacs is exemplified in an inscription from Megalopolis dating from the second or third century A.D.[36] Dionysia who had been a priestess of Isis throughout her life prepared herself for death in her goddess's temple. As the time drew near, having bathed the goddess and curled and perfumed her hair,[37] she offered prayers at the altar and departed with complete confidence in a future life. That an intimate connection with Isis and Osiris was of concern to women in regard to a future life is further demonstrated by the appearance of the *cista*

[32] On this formula see Cumont, *Les religions orientales* 94, 232-35 and notes. See also Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis* 13 n. 20, who notes that recently C. Mohrmann, "Locus refrigerii," *Études sur le latin des chrétiens II, Latin chrétien et médiéval* (Rome 1961) 81-91, addressed herself against the usual view that the Christian *refrigerium* was derived from this formula. Of special interest, Vidman notes, is p. 89 where Mohrmann says, "... il semble faire part du patrimoine eschatologique commun à tous les peuples qui connaissent les grandes chaleurs et la soif."

[33] VS 459=IG 14.1488; VS 460=CIL 6.20616; VS 461=IG 14.1782.

[34] VS 462. The fifth inscription having this phrase is from Carthage : VS 778. It is a fragment of a marble tablet on which the phrase alone appears with no mention of any names other than Osiris.

[35] VS 463=IG 14.2098.

[36] VS 42=IG 5.2.472.

[37] Cf. F. Dunand, "Sur une inscription isiaque de Mégalépolis," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 1 (1967) 219-224; *id., Le culte d'Isis* 2.165. Dunand believes that Dionysia filled the office of stolist without specifically having the title. Here, Dunand says, the allusion to the bath and to the sacred curls that the priestess impregnates with perfume refers to the *toilette* of the goddess rather than to that of the priestess. J. and L. Robert, *Bulletin épigraphique* (1968) 465-66, do not accept Dunand's interpretation, but A. Heinrichs, *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 3 (1968) 109-110, puts forth arguments in its favor.

mystica, or sacred box, in which the secrets of the religion were kept,[38] on sarcophagi and tombstones. The *cista mystica* was an essential piece of equipment in Isiac festivals, particularly in the *Isia* as described by Plutarch (*DIO* 39 [366F]). The mural in the temple of Isis at Pompeii depicting the discovery of Osiris preserves in its lower portion surrounded by two coiled snakes an excellent example of a cylindrical *cista*,[39] corresponding by its presence to the one mentioned by Plutarch. On each of the two sides of a Roman marble altar dedicated to Babullia Varilla, an Isiac priestess, the *cista mystica* appears.[40] A second marble altar from Rome also dedicated to a priestess of Isis has on each side a round *cista mystica* out of which a serpent crawls.[41] At Cereatae Marianae a round *cista mystica*, adorned with a half-moon, above which a snake crawls appears on a marble altar preserving the name of Aburena Quarta.[42] A marble sarcophagus from Mutina made by Cornelia Maximina for her husband and herself depicts the *cista* on two of its faces.[43]

A more explicit connection with life after death appears on a sarcophagus found in Ravenna in 1907.[44] The sarcophagus was made by a certain Sosius Iulianus for his daughter Sosia Iuliana and his wife Tetratia Isias. Aside from the usual dedicatory inscriptions, a Greek song written in Latin letters appears on each side of the front. There are reliefs on all sides, but the interpretation of that on the left side of the sarcophagus has resulted in diverse opinions. A seated woman holds in her left hand the lid of a small box which at the same time a man standing near her holds in his left hand; with his right hand he anoints her left eye. The interpretation of this relief is facilitated by the final two verses of the Greek song and by the presence of the words *Memphi*,

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[38] Apul., *Met.* 11.11 : Ferebatur ab alio cista secretorum capax penitus celans operta magnificae religionis. See also Tib. 1.7.48 : Et levis occultis conscia cista sacris.

[39] Tran Tam Tinh, *Essai* 143-44, #47 (Pl. X.1).

[40] Lafaye, *Histoire du culte*, #113 (Pl. V); VS 446=CIL 6.13454.

[41] VS 448=CIL 6.34776.

[42] VS 508.

[43] VS 593=CIL 11.863. On the front are a man and a woman beneath each of whose feet is a *cista*. On the left side a man and a woman hold a scroll and a crown with joined hands. Between them is a *cista*.

[44] VS 586. In my entire explanation of this sarcophagus I am following the account given by Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis* 132-38. In that place can be found a more detailed explanation of the scholarly controversies and the pertinent literature.

glegori on the left side of the sarcophagus above the man and woman and the word *Memphi* on the right side above the relief of a woman sitting and meditating. *Memphi*, a vocative, is interpreted as the designation for Tetratia Isias. *Glegori* is best understood as the imperative of the verb γρηγορέω ("be watchful"). Unfortunately, the final two verses of the Greek song are very difficult to read and interpret. According to Vidman, who saw the sarcophagus, A. J. Festugière has proposed a brilliant conjecture that corresponds not only to the meter but to the sense.[45] Festugière would read and translate the verses as follows :

> ὥς με] φιλῶν ἐδίδαξας ἀοίδιμα γράμματα φωνεῖν.
> "Χαῖρε καλλιφανής," εἴποι σοι, "πληροφοροῦ, ψυχή."
> Tu m'as appris a prononcer les aoidima grammata.
> "Salut, toute brilliante," puisse-t-elle te dire,
> "sois pleinement rassurée, âme."

In the next-to-last verse Tetratia herself is speaking. Her husband, she says, has taught her to speak the proper words before death so that she might be justified and saved. In the final verse her husband has Isis speak, proclaiming to the dead woman that she is saved. Because of the bold conjecture of καλλιφανής in the final verse, Vidman would suggest the word ἐμφανής which fits better with the Latin letters; though he is uncertain about the first letters of the verse, he would translate it approximately as follows : "Sei willkommen," möge dir die in Person Erscheinende sagen, "Seele, sei vollkommen (deiner Rettung) versichert." Both conjectures fit well with the interpretation of the relief on the left side. The man anointing the woman's eye is Tetratia's husband who is qualifying her eyes for the mystic visions. From him she has learned the mystic words to be spoken before death, and by him she has been initiated into mysteries. Following her initiation her name was changed to Memphius[46] as was sometimes the practice after

[45] A. J. Festugière, "Initiée par l'époux," *Monuments Piot* 53 (1963) 135-46.

[46] Most recently Malaise in *Les conditions de pénétration* 50-51 has warned that derivations obtained from the name of the city Memphis need not necessarily be interpreted as Isiac names. Having examined the examples, he states that one must recognize that nothing authorizes us to attribute to these names a value other than their manifest geographic nature. In connection with the sarcophagus of Ravenna he says that the conjunction of Isias and Memphi(us) is not a decisive index of a liaison with the Isiac cult because nothing proves that this woman is not really of Egyptian origin.

initiation.[47] Thus initiated and devoted to Isis, she is assured of salvation.

These frequent occurrences of Isiac phrases and objects specifically connected with the concerns of life after death and their association with women in a majority of instances illustrates the deep emotional satisfaction that women obtained from participation in these mysteries. The identification of a deceased husband or son[48] or brother with Osiris and the attempt to acquire for them a future existence through an imitation of Isis's struggles and laments provided an outlet for the profound despair and grief accompanying such a loss.[49] The firm belief that as truly as Osiris died and was resurrected to a new life so would one's beloved deceased live again was a solace to those left behind. And when it was time for the true Isiac herself to approach her death, she went confident of salvation, possessing only the secrets of her religion.[50]

The Isiac religion provided a further emotional outlet particularly for female followers in its penitential aspect. Isis apparently was a goddess whose wrath was aroused by certain improper actions. Public acts of penance by Isiac devotees are well documented among the ancient authors. Isiacs were seen sitting before altars confessing that they had violated the goddess's will.[51] Others performed severe forms of penance to gain once again the goddess's favor. Juvenal knew of female devotees who on cold winter mornings would immerse themselves three times in the icy Tiber and then crawl around the streets naked on their bleeding knees. They would even have gone to Egypt to fetch water for the temple

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[47] Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis* 133. For a similar but not identical name change involving the Isiac mysteries see Ammianus Marcellinus 16.12.25 where Mederick, king of the Alemanni, after his return from captivity in Gaul, where he was initiated into the Isiac mysteries, changed the name of his son from Agenarich to Serapion.

[48] The final line of an inscription from Fanum Fortunae (VS 585=CIL 11.6426) suggests that the deceased, a sixteen-year-old boy, was identified with Isis's son : *nomen tenebit Isidis nati puer.*

[49] Aelian, *De nat. anim.* 10.23 : *Ἐν τῇ κοπτῷ τῇ Αἰγυπτίᾳ τὴν Ἶσιν σέβουσιν Αἰγύπτιοι ταῖς τε ἄλλαις ἱερουργίας καὶ μέντοι καὶ τῇ παρὰ τῶν πενθουσῶν ἢ τοὺς ἄνδρας τοὺς σφετέρους ἢ τοὺς παῖδας ἢ τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς λατρείᾳ τε καὶ θεραπεία.*

[50] Plu. *DIO* 3 (352B).

[51] Ov., *Pont.* 1.1.51-52 :

vidi ego linigerae numen violasse fatentem
Isidis Isiacos ante sedere focos.

if Isis had so commanded.[52] Violation of the prescriptions of chastity by women was at least one cause for repentance. When a husband discovered that his wife had not observed the sacred days of chastity, he begged forgiveness through his tears, offering a goose and a slender cake as appeasement.[53] No less punishment could a man expect if he should make a sexual attack on a woman who was sacred to Isis.[54] On occasion punishment was exacted from sinners in the form of blindness.[55] Isis was also liable to anger if someone desecrated altars set up for one of

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[52] Juv., *Sat.* 6.522-29 :

hibernum fracta glacie descendet in amnem,
ter matutino Tiberi mergetur et ipsis
verticibus timidum caput abluet, inde superbi
totum regis agrum nuda ac tremibunda cruentis
erepet genibus; si candida iusserit Io,
ibit ad Aegypti finem calidaque petitas
a Meroe portabit aquas ut spargat in aede
Isidis, antiquo quae proxima surgit ovili.

Cf. Sen., *De vita beata* 26.8 : ... cum aliqua genibus per viam repens ululat ...

[53] Juv., *Sat.* 6.535-41 :

ille petit veniam, quotiens non abstinet uxor
concubitu sacris observandisque diebus
magnaque debetur visa est argentea serpens;
et movisse caput visa est argentea serpens;
illius lacrimae meditataque murmura praestant
ut veniam culpae non abnuat, ansere magno
scilicet et tenui popano corruptus, Osiris.

[54] Xen., *Eph.* 3.11.4-5; 5.4.5-7; Hld., *Aeth.* 2.25.1-6 where the Isiac priest Calasiris was tempted by the beauty of the devotee. Though the gods preserved him from approaching her, it was nonetheless a sin of intention in punishment for which he imposed exile on himself.

[55] Ov., *Pont.* 1.1.53-54 :

alter, ob huic similem privatus lumine culpam,
clamabat media se meruisse via.

Juv., *Sat.* 13.93 :

Isis et irato feriat mea lumina sistro

Numerous eyes of gold or silver were dedicated as ex-votos in the sanctuary of Isis and Sarapis at Delos. They indicate that recoveries from blindness and other eye diseases were attributed to Isis as well as the diseases themselves. Cf. R. Pettazzoni, *La confessione dei peccati* (Bologna 1935-36) II.45 and n. 144.

her devotees[56] or enslaved those who had been freed under her auspices.[57]

It was especially in this aspect of the religion that Roman matrons who were devotees of Isis displayed their devotion to the priests. The priest was not so much one who intervened for the sinner but an actual substitute for her, the priest himself doing the weeping and begging and perhaps the very confessing of the sin.[58]

More often Isis was viewed as a gentle goddess who presided over the spiritual and physical aspects of love. Her relationship to Aphrodite-Venus has already been pointed out. Her role as protectress of lovers is particularly emphasized in the Greek romances of imperial times. These novels of Graeco-Roman antiquity actually arose from religious roots.[59] The novelist Xenophon in his third-century romance, the *Ephesiaca*, portrayed Isis as the preserver of the heroine Anthia's chastity. Habrocomes, a handsome, sixteen-year-old boy fell in love with Anthia at the Artemis festival in Ephesus. The two were married and then set off to travel in fulfillment of the oracle of Apollo at Charos. Thus began for the two lovers a series of dangers at sea, kidnappings, imprisonments,

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[56] VS 464=CIL 6.21129; VS 465=CIL 6.24760. See also VS 52=IG 7.2681 where defilement would cost the criminal 700 denaria to be paid to Isis.

[57] VS 55=IG 7.2872 where a penalty of 1000 drachmas would have to be paid to Sarapis. In VS 67=IG 9.1.86 the penalty was due to both Isis and Sarapis. See also VS 69=IG 9.1.188.

[58] Pettazzoni, *La confessione* II.48.

[59] See R. Merkelbach, *Roman und Mysterium in der Antike* (Munich and Berlin 1962) which Merkelbach devotes entirely to the proof of this thesis. Whereas the general thesis is commonly accepted as correct, there has been some criticism as to the extent to which Merkelbach carries his theory. See, for example, the comments of R. Turcan in "Le roman 'initiatique' : à propos d'un livre récent," *RHR* 163 (1963) 149-99. On page 150 of this article Turcan notes that one can only agree with Merkelbach when he affirms that the novel must have religious origins. But, says Turcan, Merkelbach wishes to go much further. He defines Greco-Roman novels as *Mysterientexte*. Each story, even a Christian novel, is only a narrative transposition of an initiation. Merkelbach sees in every episode, gesture, formula, or word of the hero an allusion to a ritual of the mysteries. Further, on page 153 Turcan says : "Que des représentations religieuses fort anciennes aient inspiré plus d'un conte populaire, c'est ce qu'on ne révoquera point en doute; mais que les mystères gréco-romains soient 'dramatisés' dans les romans qui en dérivent, voilà ce qu'on n'admettra pas aussi aisément."

and attempted rapes. Many attempts were made to violate Anthia, but her chastity was protected by Isis. In an incident in which Psammis,[60] an Indian rajah who had bought Anthia as a slave, was about to rape her, she related how her father had consecrated her to Isis from the day of her birth until she was married.[61] "If," she said, "you do violence to that which belongs to the goddess, she will be angry; her vengeance will be terrible." Thereupon, Psammis paid hommage to Isis and respected Anthia. Once again Isis rescued her from a similar situation when Polyidos,[62] who had captured Anthia and had taken her to Alexandria was overcome with passion for her. Anthia fled to the temple of Isis and prayed for help: *σύ με, ὦ δέσποινα Αἰγύπτου, πάλιν σῶσον, ᾗ ἐβοήθησας πολλάκις φεισάσθω μου καὶ Πολυίδος τῆς διὰ σε σώφρονος Ἀβροκόμῃ τηρουμένης*. So again she was allowed to remain pure for Habrocomes. At last husband and wife met again at Rhodes whereupon the crowds raised up cries of joy and salutations to Isis. The lovers themselves entered the temple of Isis and offered to her thanks for having saved and reunited them. Later, at Ephesus, the two offered prayers and sacrifices to Artemis in her temple there. Throughout the novel Isis and Artemis are portrayed as two aspects of one divinity,[63] as was harmonious with the syncretism of the age. At the festival of Artemis where the two lovers met, Anthia was part of the great procession and was herself dressed like Artemis. Before beginning their travels the two lovers pledged faithfulness to each other, Anthia swearing her oath by Artemis. Yet in the midst of perils it was Isis who was invoked and who protected the lovers. Finally, both goddesses were given thanks when the two had been saved and reunited.

Further proof of this view of Isis as protectress in matters of love

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[60] Xen., *Eph.* 3.11.2-5.

[61] In an inscription from Athens (VS 22=IG 2/3².4069) a man and his wife seem to consecrate their daughter to Isis: ... *τὴν ἑαυτῶν θυγατέρα Νουμμίαν κλεὼ Εἴσιδι εὐχήν*. Dunand, *Le culte d'Isis* 2.140 and n. 3. suggests that another Athenian inscription (VS 21=IG 2/3².4068) may also refer to the consecration of a young girl to Isis. It is probable, however, that the man in question dedicated to Isis a statue of his daughter. Yet Dunand notes that the verb (*ἀνατίθημι*) used in the formula of offering is found in Xenophon's *Ephesiaca* to designate the consecration of a young girl to Isis.

[62] Xen., *Eph.* 5.4.5-7.

[63] Witt, *Isis* 243.

is found, though not quite so directly, in the *Aethiopica* written by a third-century author named Heliodorus. This story relates, once again, the dangers and torments endured by two lovers, Theagenes and Chariclea, in their attempt to be reunited. Two of the characters are priests of Isis at Memphis, and another had vacated his priesthood. This former priest, Thyamis, as he was about to marry the heroine, had a dream in which Isis in her temple led Chariclea by the hand before him, saying that the girl would be his wife.[64] The goddess then spoke mysterious words, saying that Thyamis would have her and yet not have her, that he would murder her and she would not die. Thyamis mistakenly interpreted this to mean that he would have her as a wife, not a virgin and that he would murder her virginity. On the contrary, it meant that Chariclea only pretended to want to marry Thyamis and that he would actually murder a girl whom he thought was Chariclea. So it was through Isis that not only her virginity but also her life were saved. In this novel there are no scenes in which the assistance of Isis is invoked or thanks and sacrifices are offered to her, nevertheless it was Isis who protected the heroine so that in the end she could, her chastity intact, be reunited with her lover.

The final book of Apuleius's *Metamorphoses* was inspired by the same local legends which developed into the Greek love romances having a religious climax with Isis as the savior goddess. There are those who see the *Metamorphoses* simply as entertainment wherein the eleventh book depicting Lucius's deliverance by Isis merely echoes the usual ending of the love-romances. But a more complex interpretation seems likely. Lucius had rejected his home life and entered into a period of obsession with sensuality and magic. Because of these vices he was turned into an ass. Thereafter he was further punished by being forced to mingle with the baser elements of society. Only when Lucius dedicated his life to Isis was he freed from his slavery to sexuality and magic. Thus, Isis again appeared as one who loved chastity and purity and endeavored to preserve them.

Furthermore, the eleventh book seems to have been inspired by Apuleius's personal devotion to the Isiac religion in the face of the expansion of Christianity at that time in Africa. Understood as such, the eleventh book of the *Metamorphoses* "swings sharply into focus as a

[64] Hld., *Aeth.* 1.18.2-5.

commitment to pagan personal religion composed under the stimulus of hostile taunts and opposing claims."[65] The special emphasis on Isis's demand for sexual chastity suggests that the Christians' distinitive claim to this virtue is being challenged.

There is evidence, too, that betrothals were made in the temple of Isis with the goddess as a witness. In the love story of Clitophon and Leucippe told by the Greek author Achilles Tatius, Clitophon, believing that Leucippe was dead, agreed to marry a wealthy widow.[66] The widow and Clitophon decided to meet at the temple of Isis to discuss their future plans. There Isis was their witness as they swore to love each other honorably and to make themselves husband and wife. The oath was felt to be binding as the widow indicates later when Clitophon, having discovered that Leucippe was alive, was reluctant to follow through with the marriage.[67] She reminds him of Isis and the oaths sworn before her altar.

Recently Tran Tam Tinh while publishing two lamps[68] noticed the presence of a particular artistic motif in which the busts of Isis and Sarapis exchange an embrace, sometimes kissing each other, sometimes entwining their arms about each other. The motif appears generally on lamp handles and seems to have originated in the second half of the first century A.D. The majority of the monuments displaying this motif came from Italy. The motif has no relation to any other works of art. These facts and its absence from Alexandria lead to the conclusion that the motif, which made a rapid disappearance, was created in a Roman workshop. In an attempt to interpret the motif of the embrace Tran Tam Tinh proposes and rejects the possibility that it is a portrayal of the Egyptian myth where the kiss would represent the kiss of life. This mythological interpretation does not correspond to the theme on the lamps where love alone is expressed. Moreover, according to Tran Tam Tinh, the artists could not have copied monuments since the theme appears in no other art form. Rather, he suggests, it was among the methods of propaganda used by the Isiac religion. The Isiac aretalogies, indeed, had assigned an important place to conjugal love. The theme

[65] Walsh, *The Roman Novel* 186.

[66] Ach. Tat. 5.14.

[67] *Ibid.*, 5.26.

[68] V. Tran Tam Tinh, "Isis et Sérapis se regardant," *Revue Archéologique* 28 (1970) 55-80.

was no less important among Christians. Authors such as Minucius Felix, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria derided the frivolous love of the Olympian gods, but found nothing reprehensible in the relationship of Isis and Sarapis. Tran Tam Tinh calls attention to third-and fourth-century monuments of Christian archaeology in which a husband and wife share a tender expression and caress each other. Corresponding to the role played by Isis in the Greek romances as protectress of faithful lovers and spouses, the theme of the happiness and love of the divine couple was a symbol of the blessings which Isis and Sarapis granted to faithful spouses. Surely this was a popular conception of Isis and Sarapis, especially among the lower classes whose greatest source of happiness was their domestic life and among women whose only concern in most instances was home life.

There is a considerable amount of concrete evidence that Isis was looked upon in the Graeco-Roman world as the goddess who presided over fertility and birth. Of chief importance are instances in which Isis was identified with the goddess Bubastis and Artemis-Diana. The role of Bubastis as goddess of fertility and her connection with Isis as indicated by several Hellenistic terra cotta figurines have already been mentioned. Inscriptions provide further evidence of the connection of the two goddesses and the special interest that women took in Isis-Bubastis. The earliest epigraphic mention of Bubastis in connection with Isis outside of Egypt is in an inscription of Rhodes that dates back perhaps as far as the second century B.C.[69] There appears the only masculine priest of Bubastis in her connection with Isis. A stela from Gomphi in Thessaly has inscribed on it a hexametric hymn of Isis wherein Bubastis is mentioned.[70] Only the beginning of each verse is legible; the other letters seem to have been deleted for religious reasons. In an inscription from Hyampolis in Phocis there is mention of the *Bubastia*, the festival of Isis-Bubastis that seems to have been instituted at Hyampolis during the period of Trajan's reign.[71] At Iasus in Caria a man and his wife set up an altar and some censers to Anubis, Isis Pelagia, and Isis-Bubastis.[72]

[69] VS 173. Vidman notes after this inscription that A. Salač mistakenly thought this was a priestess.

[70] VS 92.

[71] VS 67=IG 9.1.86.

[72] VS 274.

A dedication of Alexandria was addressed to Bubastis by a woman for her daughter who was saved from great danger.[73] More indicative of the importance assigned by women to Isis-Bubastis are inscriptions in which priestesses or worshipers of Isis-Bubastis are mentioned. In Rome T. Flavius Ampliatus set up an inscription in memory of his wife Ostoria Successa, who was designated as a priestess of Bubastis.[74] The word *Bubastiaca* was used to identify someone as either a priestess or worshiper of Isis-Bubastis. It is interesting to note that its masculine form *Bubastiacus* occurs nowhere, whereas the equivalent terms *Isiacus* and *Anubiacus* occur in the masculine.[75] (*Anubiacus*, however, does not appear in the feminine form.) Probably these *Bubastiacae* formed a sort of sisterhood of believers, at least in Rome and Ostia.[76] At Rome Cornelia Mo ... who set up an inscription for herself and her husband was called *Bubastiaca*.[77] At Ostia Caltilia Diodora *Bubastiaca* in accordance with her will gave some luxurious gifts to Isis-Bubastis.[78] The only inscription in which a man alone made a dedication to Isis-Bubastis is one from Scarbantia in upper Pannonia : *Isidi Augustae et Bubasti G. Pomponius Philinus, Pomponi Severi libertus, votum solvit* (VS 664 = CIL 3.4234). We can well imagine a situation in which Philinus pledged vows to Isis-Bubastis if she would assist his wife in a difficult pregnancy. Or perhaps the circumstances approximated those in which Ovid found himself when his Corinna was on her death bed following an attempted abortion. It was Isis to whom the poet prayed for mercy, for it was she who was known to have compassion on women in labor, and in return he promised her vows and gifts and an inscription. His beautiful prayer reveals a good knowledge of the habits of Isiac devotees :

> Isis, Paraetonium genialiaque arva Canopi
> quae colis et Memphin palmiferamque Pharon,
> quaque celer Nilus lato delapsus in alveo
> per septem portus in maris exit aquas,

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[73] E. Breccia, *Iscrizioni greche e latine* (Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée d'Alexandrie) (Le Caire 1911) #121.

[74] VS 423=CIL 6.2249.

[75] Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis* 90.

[76] Dunand, *REL* 40 (1962) 85.

[77] VS 422=CIL 6.3880.

[78] VS 534=CIL 14.21.

per tua sistra precor, per Anubidis ora verendi—
sic tua sacra pius semper Osiris amet,
pigraque labatur circa donaria serpens,
et comes in pompa corniger Apis eat!
huc adhibe vultus, et in una parce duobus!
nam vitam dominae tu dabis, illa mihi.
saepe tibi sedit certis operata diebus,
qua tangit laurus Gallica turma tuas.
tuque laborantes utero miserata puellas
quarum tarda latens corpora tendis onus,
lenis ades precibusque meis fave, Ilithyia :
digna est quam iubeas muneris esse tui.
ipse ego tura dabo fumosis candidus aris,
ipse feram ante tuos munera vota pedes;
adiciam titulum Servata Naso Corinna,
tu modo fac titulo muneribusque locum.

(*Am.* 2. 13. 7-26)

In one other reference to Isis Ovid made clear the role of the goddess as protectress of pregnant women. In the *Metamorphoses* 9.685-701 when Telethusa was about to give birth to her child, she pondered over her husband Lygdus's threat that if the child were a girl he would not allow it to live. In the middle of the night in her dreams she saw Isis with her glorious procession standing at the foot of her bed. Standing with Anubis and Apis and Osiris and Harpocrates and the crocodiles was *sancta Bubastis*, here portrayed as a separate but associated goddess. Then Isis seemed to speak to Telethusa :

pars o Telethusa mearum,
Pone graves curas mandataque falle mariti;
Nec dubites, cum te partu Lucina levarit,
Tollere, quidquid erit! dea sum auxiliaris opemque
Exorata fero, nec te coluisse quereris
Ingratum numen.

(*Met.* 9.696-701)

Telethusa did, in fact, put her trust in Isis and managed to save her daughter's life by concealing her sex.

The relationship of Isis with Artemis-Diana was a rather unusual one.[79] The identification of the two goddesses is clear from their roles in

[79] For an artistic assimilation of Artemis and Isis see Witt, *Isis*, Pl. 36. See also Witt, *Isis*, chapt. 11, "Great Artemis-Isis," 141-51, and *id.*, "The Importance of Isis

Xenophon's *Ephesiaca*. Artemis-Diana was the young huntress renowned for her virginity. How she could be identified with Isis whose one most important characteristic was motherhood is difficult to understand until we realize that in her cult at Ephesus Artemis personified female fertility.[80] Moreover, chastity had an important place in the Isiac religion. This gave the two goddesses more than one common point on which they might meet. Indeed, in Ovid's prayer following Corinna's abortion attempt, Diana's epithet Ilithyia was given to Isis, indicating the identification of the two in matters concerning childbirth. In an inscription on a marble tablet used as a table in a church in Beroea the two goddesses were also identified.[81] The dedication was made by a man and his wife paying a vow for their daughter, probably after the birth of her child, to Isis Lochia, the epithet applied to Diana as goddess of childbirth.

So women in the Graeco-Roman world viewed Isis as among other things the goddess whose protection they might seek in the whole span of events connected with the reproduction process. From her womanliness and motherliness her followers hoped for understanding and help. Her identification with other goddesses who presided over the same sphere was only natural and reinforced the governance over life that she had maintained since her very beginnings. She acquired more general epithets that praised her fertility and her bestowal of all forms of life. The interchange between Lucius and Isis at the beginning of the eleventh book of Apuleius's *Metamorphoses* is illustrative of her sovereignty over all living things. In his desperation Lucius invoked the all-powerful goddess known under various names, whether she was Ceres, "the original, nourishing mother of the fruits of the earth," or whether she was Venus, "who at the first beginnings of the world allied the two sexes in generative love and in the eternal propagation of the human race,"

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for the Fathers," *Studia Patristica* 8 (1966) 135-45. It is, however, necessary to be somewhat cautious with Witt's conclusions, especially as regards syncretism, as has been pointed out by Stephanie West in "A Further Note on *ΑΓΑΠΗ* in P. Oxy. 1380," *JThS* (New Series) 20.1 (1969) 228-30.

[80] Witt, *Isis* 142. V. von Gonzenbach in her article "Der Griechisch-Römische Scheitelschmuck und die Funde von Thasos," *BCH* 93 (1969) 935, notes that in northern Greece the worship of Artemis Kourotrophos of classical times was changed in the empire to a mystery religion with a cult association to which small girls could belong.

[81] VS 107=SEG 12.316. The inscription is reproduced in Witt, *Isis* Pl. 15.

or the one, whom he did not name, "who nourished the fertile seeds with damp heat."[82] Indeed, it was Isis who answered him, and when she did, she announced herself as "mother of the nature of things, mistress of all the elements, initial progeny of the races."[83] Plutarch (*DIO* 56 [374B]) informs the reader that Isis is sometimes called Mouth which means mother. Apuleius later referred to the cow in the procession as being the image of the goddess who was the fruitful mother of all things.[84] Under this aspect she was called μήτηρ μεγάλη,[85] μήτηρ θεῶν,[86] and merely μήτηρ.[87] Her fertility was also emphasized in the epithets καρποφόρος[88] and *frugifera*.[89]

Isis's own motherhood was a source of inspiration for women in the Graeco-Roman world. The relationship of mother and child was idealized in numerous statues of Isis and Harpocrates. As a model of maternal love, Isis was very frequently portrayed holding the infant Harpocrates in her arms as she suckled him.[90] Representations of this type did not originate with the Greeks and Romans but were common in ancient Egypt. Representations of divine or mortal women with child at breast are frequent in Egyptian art, while in ancient cultures outside of the Nile valley they are strikingly seldom and enter late.[91] This maternal gesture had particular symbolism in the old Egyptian religion because

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[82] Apul., *Met.* 11.2 : ... alma frugum parens originalis, ... Venus, quae primis rerum exordiis sexuum diversitatem generato amore sociasti et alterna subdole humano genere propagato ... udis ignibus nutriens laeta semina ...

[83] *Ibid.*, 11.4 : ... rerum naturae parens, elementorum omnium domina, saeculorum progenies initialis ...

[84] *Ibid.*, 11.11 : ... omniparentis deae fecundum simulacrum ...

[85] VS CE 50a.

[86] VS CE 82. Cf. Apul., *Met.* 11.4 where Isis says that the Phrygians call her mother of the gods at Pessinus.

[87] VS 741=CIL 12.2217.

[88] VS 317.

[89] VS 379=CIL 6.351; VS 724=CIL 13.1337.

[90] Tran Tam Tinh, *Essai* 88 notes the strangeness of the almost total absence at Pompeii of the type of Isis nourishing Harpocrates. He mentions in his catalogue only one statue (#99) of Isis Kourotrophos. "Les isiaques pompéiens étaient-ils insensibles à la beauté de cette figuration de la maternité divine?" he asks. Several examples of this type in Alexandrian art are listed by him on p. 88 n. 1. For other examples see Drexler, "Isis", 504-509. See also *supra* chapter 2 n. 26.

[91] Müller, *Münchner Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst* 14 (1963) 8, 36 n. 3.

milk issued from the divine breast and brought to the one nursed life, longevity, salvation, and divinity. This belief was found in Greek mythology also : Heracles must suck at the breast of Hera to obtain immortality.[92] Although other goddesses in Egypt were portrayed suckling their infants, by the time of the Middle Kingdom the type was definitely identified with Isis and Horus.[93] In the Graeco-Roman period this type and the type in which Harpocrates merely sat on her lap were found in bronze statues, terra cotta statues, on gems, and on Alexandrian coins.[94] It was probably at Alexandria that the cult of Isis nursing Harpocrates developed with a new artistic type. If statues of *Isis lactans* from the Ptolemaic period are compared with coins of the Antonine period, Isis appears to have been suddenly Hellenized. The sudden appearance of these coins in a temple in 108/109 A.D., their frequence under the Antonines, and their progressive disappearance under Commodus and the first Severan emperors most likely correspond to a renovation of the temple and especially to the extraordinary expansion of the cult of the mother and infant. The motif had already appeared frequently in the first century on the handles of lamps.[95] These figures of Isis nursing Harpocrates found on lamp handles must have been ex-votos offered to the goddess for the protection of the family and especially for the protection of infants against evil spirits.[96] The veneration in which the character of the nourishing mother was held is evident from the description of the procession down to the sea in Apuleius (*Met.* 11.10). Among the principal Isiac priests who were leaders of the sacred rites and who carried the relics of the goddess was one who carried a vessel of gold in the shape of a breast from which milk flowed (*aureum vasculum in modum papillae rotundatum de quo lacte libabat*). A mysterious statement by Macrobius describes Isis as a goddess whose whole body was covered thickly with many breasts, thus representing the nutritive element of all things,[97] not merely of her son.

[92] Tran Tam Tinh and Labrecque, *Isis lactans* 1 and n. 3.

[93] G. D. Hornblower, "Predynastic Figures of Women and their Successors," *JEA* 15 (1929) 43. Müller, *Münchner Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst* 14 (1963) 9.

[94] Drexler, "Isis," 504-509.

[95] Tran Tam Tinh and Labrecque, *Isis lactans* 16-17.

[96] *Ibid.*, 20.

[97] Macr., *Sat.* 1.20.18 : Hinc est quod continuatis uberibus corpus deae omne densetur, quia vel terrae vel rerum naturae altu nutritur universitas.

The opinion is frequently put forth that *Isis lactans* strongly influenced from an iconographic point of view the creation of *Maria lactans*, the Blessed Virgin and Christ Child. Tran Tam Tinh has examined this hypothesis and has pointed out the large chronological gap between the *Isis lactans* and the first appearances of the *Maria lactans* both in Egypt and outside of Egypt.[98] Relatively few images of *Maria lactans* have been found in Christian Egypt, and these few images were found not in public churches or chapels but in private chapels or cells of hermits of the desert. Outside of Egypt the third through the sixth centuries witnessed the great popularity of the theme of the Virgin holding the infant Jesus on her knees, but the theme of *Maria lactans* seems to have been ignored. Most of the images of *Maria lactans* which have come down to us from the West date from the twelfth century or later.

Harpocrates also appeared with Isis as an older child standing by her side, frequently portrayed with his finger in his mouth, a gesture not uncommon for children, but one which led the ancient authors to think that he called for silence in the face of the mysteries of the religion.[99]

To judge by the number of representations of Isis and Harpocrates it was in her role as mother that Isis achieved the greatest popularity in the Graeco-Roman world. On the other hand, inscriptional and literary references in which she was called mother or where her motherhood was honored, as noted above, are few. The instances in which she was called mother in inscriptions and literature generally refer to her as the parent of all things or mother of the gods rather than emphasizing her own motherhood. The relationship of the mother and child, however, was not forgotten; inscriptions were dedicated to Isis and Sarapis accompanied by either Harpocrates or Anubis or both.[100] In some cases honor was paid to Isis by a dedication to her son, as in an inscription from Perusia in which Critonia Chrotis made a dedication to Harpocrates under the name of Apollo *ob honorem Isidis*.[101] At Neapolis a certain M. Opsius Navius Phannianus set up a statue of Apollo Horus Harpo-

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[98] Tran Tam Tinh and Labrecque, *Isis lactans* 40-49.

[99] Plu., *DIO* 68 (378C); Varro, *De ling. lat.* 5.10, 5.57; Catull. 74, 102; Ov., *Met.*, 11.693; Pliny, *Nat. hist.* 33.3.

[100] The four-part formula is so typically Greek, according to Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis* 16, that it does not occur in the Latin form at all.

[101] VS 577=CIL 11.1916.

crates and dedicated it to Isis.[102] In the final analysis it must be judged that the concept of maternal love could be displayed visually with more depth and ease and true beauty of meaning than it could verbally.

Despite the fact that the Alexandrian triad was more apt in the Graeco-Roman world to include Isis, Sarapis, and Anubis than Isis, Sarapis, and Harpocrates,[103] the true family grouping of Isis, Sarapis, and Harpocrates did exert an influence on the religious life of the ordinary family. At times this included only a husband and wife. The famous sarcophagus from Ravenna,[104] for example, depicts a wife being initiated into the Isiac mysteries by her husband; he had also taught her the mysterious words that would gain her salvation after death. On a grave relief from Rome[105] the Isiac priestess Galatea stands at the side of a man, presumably her husband, before a flaming altar. The man holds in his left hand a box from which he seems to sprinkle incense on the flames. What part he played in the cult is not certain, but the two appear to have been united in their worship. There are, of course, many dedications made to Isis and Sarapis by husbands to their wives and vice-versa, by fathers or mothers with their children, and by husbands and wives together. From Chius comes a Greek inscription[106] in which a certain Thraseas set up an inscription on behalf of his entire family to the entire family of Egyptian gods :

> *Θρασέας Διογένους ὑπὲρ ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τῶν τέκνων*
> *Καὶ τῆς γυναικὸς Πόλλας καὶ τῶν τέκνων Πόλλας καὶ*
> *Κυίντου τέκνων Ἴσιδι Σεράπιδι, Ἀνούβιδι,*
> *Ἁρποκράτει, θεοῖς συννάοις καὶ συμβώμοις εὐχήν.*

Lafaye in his catalogue (*Histoire du culte* #101) described a marble plaque on which three Roman people appeared in the costumes and with the attributes of Sarapis, Isis, and Harpocrates. The husband and wife stood with hands joined on either side of their son who represented the young Harpocrates.

Of particular interest in terms of the Isiac religion as a family cult are instances of children dedicated to the religion by their parents. Children

[102] VS 496=IG 14.719.

[103] Roussel, *Les cultes égyptiens* 378; Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis* 15.

[104] VS 586=ILS 9442, except for the Greek song.

[105] VS 453=Lafaye, *Histoire du culte* #115.

[106] VS 257=CIG 2230.

were granted special protection, in fact, by Isis who was hailed in an inscription from Rome as *educatrix*.[107] Most notable among these instances are the portraits of male children who wear the so-called *Horuslocke* that appeared in its typical form since the second century A.D.[108] Young girls also wore the *Horuslocke* although examples of such are not very numerous.[109] The *Horuslocke* was one thick curl extending straight down from the back of the head or frequently hanging behind the right ear. The rest of the head either was shaved or had rather short hair. This curl signified that the boy or girl had received a sort of preconsecration into the Egyptian cults without being expressly designated as an initiate.[110] This would be not at all unnatural since Harpocrates had proclaimed his governance over the upbringing of children in the hymn from Chalcis in his honor.[111] Further evidence of the interest parents took in bringing their children up under the influence of the Isiac religion exists in the case of Anthia, in Xenophon's *Ephesiaca*,[112] whose father had dedicated her from birth to Isis and in the case of Clea, in Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride*,[113] who had been consecrated in the Osirian rites by her mother and father.

One might expect by quickly checking through the epithets given to Isis in inscriptions[114] dedicated by women or in which women played a

[107] VS 371=CIL 6.30915 where the dedication is made to *Isidi Lydiae educatrici*.

[108] For a full treatment of this see the monograph by V. von Gonzenbach, *Untersuchungen zu den Knabenweihen im Isiskult der römischen Kaiserzeit* (Bonn 1957). See further the controversy between Gonzenbach in "Der Griechisch-Römische Scheitelschmuck und die Funde von Thasos," *BCH* 93 (1969) 885-945 and Claude Rolley in "Nattes, Rubans et Pendeloques," *BCH* 94 (1970) 551-65. Rolley suggests that adornment of the head was characteristic of infants who died at an early age and whom one wished to place, in the other world, under the protection of divinities outside of the traditional Graeco-Roman pantheon, most often the Egyptian divinities. Gonzenbach believes these conclusions are incorrect.

[109] Gonzenbach, *BCH* 93 (1969) 902. An example of a girl about eight to twelve years old with a *Horuslocke* appears in Gonzenbach's catalogue (#35) here.

[110] Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis* 131. See also A. D. Nock, review of Gonzenbach, *AJA* 64 (1960) 197 and Gonzenbach, *BCH* 93 (1969) 917, 927.

[111] VS 88.

[112] Xen., *Eph.* 3.11.4.

[113] Plu., *DIO* 35 (364E).

[114] Malaise, *Les conditions de pénétration* 181-82, notes that in Italy fifty-five percent of the inscriptions have only the name of Isis whereas the remaining have an epithet.

substantial role to discover some favorite way that women had of addressing her. In fact, it seems that their favorite name for her was *Augusta*,[115] which also was the most common epithet employed by men. The second most frequently used epithet among women was *regina*[116] and following that *domina*,[117] both of which also had corresponding popularity among men. All of these epithets express the complete sovereignty of the goddess over her subjects and essentially hail her as the all-powerful goddess. The epithet *Augusta* is believed by some to refer to Isis's position as goddess of the family in her identification with the Lares.[118] In fact, the Isiac cult had made its way into everyday life even in the most intimate way.[119] The images of the Alexandrian divinities appeared especially at Pompeii in the niches and aediculae that served as lararia. There the Egyptian gods were worshiped as protectors of domestic life. Tran Tam Tinh[120] has made the interesting observation that of all the oriental gods only the Alexandrians were admitted as Penates in the domestic cult. Malaise,[121] however, convincingly argues against Isis's identification with the Lares as being the source of the epithet *Augusta*. Anubis, he notes, who was not received into the lararia, was also called *Augustus* (VS 599=CIL 5.8210). To Malaise the conception of *Isis Augusta* as protectress of the imperial throne is more logical, but the imperial sense of this title must have had serious restrictions. Sarapis was only once called *Augustus* contrary to the expectation that he would have received the title more frequently since he was bound up with the emperors especially in the Flavian and Severan periods.

Among epithets given to Isis by women, only three—Bubastis, *puel-*

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[115] VS 486; VS 577=CIL 11.1916; VS 649; VS 653; VS 760=CIL 2.2416; VS 765=CIL 2.4080. Isis is an *interpretatio Romana* of Isis which does not seem to have an equivalent in the *interpretatio Graeca*. Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis* 115. For a plaque of marble found in 1791 at Civita-Rotta dating from the first/second century A.D. see VS 503=CIL 10.4717 and Tran Tam Tinh, *Campanie* 81.

[116] VS 621=CIL 5.2797; VS 681=CIL 3.7907; VS 682=CIL 3.7908; VS 739=CIL 12.1562.

[117] VS 510=CIL 10.6303; VS 588 =CIL 11.695; VS 754=CIL 2.981.

[118] Lafaye, *Histoire du culte* 129; Tran Tam Tinh, *Essai* 103-109.

[119] For the connection of Isis with Vesta see VS 513=IG 14.433.

[120] Tran Tam Tinh, *Essai* 109.

[121] Malaise, *Les conditions de pénétration* 184.

laris, and Lochia—specifically pertain to her role as patroness of women. The study of epithets alone does little to provide us with an image of Isis as she appeared to women in the Graeco-Roman world. A closer study of the inscriptions, however, of their content and the occasions on which they were set up, along with a review of the other archaeological and literary remains has indicated the reasons for which women in the Graeco-Roman world sought her out. In sum, she was a protectress during the most important occasions of the life-cycle—birth, marriage, and death. Every emotion experienced by the ordinary person at such events had already been experienced by Isis. At death she provided an emotional outlet through the enactment of her sufferings. Purification from one's sins was granted by her through penance, and eventually salvation was attained. One's chastity was preserved by Isis before marriage, and troth was pledged with Isis as witness. Finally, she provided protection during childbirth and nurtured infants. All of these matters were of primary concern to women, and it was they who sought Isis out most eagerly to fill a need which the Greek and Roman religions failed to fill.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE CULT OF ISIS

The frequent mention by scholars, and, more especially by the ancient authors, of the participation of women in the Egyptian cults should not lead one to believe that women formed the majority of the participants of the cults or that it was only because of women that the Egyptian cults gained such popularity. While there were several reasons why women were more attracted to Isis than to other deities, they were involved in the cults less frequently than might be imagined and than has, indeed, been implied in some instances. This may be illustrated by the use of a few statistics based on the inscriptions relating to the cult as collected by Vidman in his *Sylloge inscriptionum religionis Isiacae et Sarapiacae.* The catalogue contains 1099 inscriptions.[1] Of these 1099 inscriptions, according to my calculations, 200 or 18.2% mention women who were priestesses, members of cult associations, or ordinary devotees of the Egyptian cults, as indicated by dedications they made or dedications made on their behalf. In this number are not included queens or empresses for whom dedications were made to Isis or other women whose names appear in inscriptions relating to the cult but concerning whom there is no indication of having been affiliated with the cult themselves. This percentage seems rather low when the emphasis given by the elegiac poets, for example, to women's devotion to Isis is considered, and, in any case, is not great enough to warrant the assumption that the female element gave the cult its great popularity. A breakdown of these inscriptions according to the localities from which they originate also yield interesting results. Of the major cult centers Athens and Rome seem to have produced the greatest number of female adherents, in fact, far more than any other cult centers. Of the 35 inscriptions from Athens 17 or 48.6% concern female devotees, while from Rome 36 of 97

[1] Although Vidman's numbering only goes to 810, some inscriptions have the same number but are further qualified by a lower case letter, for example, 450a is an inscription distinct from 450. In addition, on the same basis, 247 inscriptions from Delos are included and are numbered according to P. Roussel, *Les cultes égyptiens à Délos du III^e^ au I^er^ siècle av. J.-C.* (Paris-Nancy 1916), abbreviated as CE.

inscriptions or 37.1% speak of women in this connection. From the other major cult centers the percentages are much smaller. Of the 75 inscriptions from the island of Rhodes not one mentions a woman devotee. This could in part be due to the fact that Rhodes figured as a cult center at a very early period, from the third to the first century B.C., as the inscriptions reveal, when Isis, though she had outstripped Sarapis in favor, had not yet reached the peak of her popularity which came only with the empire. Here it should be pointed out that even at Athens only 5 of the 17 inscriptions relating to women originated in the centuries before Christ. Although Isis and the whole family of Egyptian gods were almost always connected with Sarapis in the Graeco-Roman world and although a priest of Sarapis was also a priest of Isis,[2] the more frequent and primary mention of Sarapis in the inscriptions of the Hellenistic period reveals greater interest in him as representative of the family. Of the 75 inscriptions from Rhodes 62 name Sarapis, a priest of Sarapis, or an association of Sarapis devotees, 5 mention Isis or Isiac associations, and 8 name Isis and Sarapis or their associations together. Moreover, the majority of inscriptions from Rhodes are merely lists of priests wherein it would be unusual to find a woman named, since Isis priestesses are not known elsewhere until the empire.

Women, likewise, played a very minor part in the thriving cult center of Delos. Of the 247 inscriptions from Delos only 28 or 11.3% concern women adherents. Again, there is no evidence at all of an Isis priestess from Delos.[3] The primary role played by women at Delos was that of canephor, a secondary priestess in the processions. The number of women admitted into the cult societies was severely limited, as was true all over the Greek world in all periods.[4] At Delos there is one female mentioned among the 20 *therapeutai*[5] and 7 women out of 16 *dekadistai*;[6] in one instance one woman is named out of 19 contributors,[7] in another,

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[2] In large cult centers Isis and Sarapis each had their own temples and priests, but in less important towns they were rendered a common cult. Malaise, *Les conditions de pénétration* 135.

[3] Roussel, *Les cultes égyptiens* 275 n. 6.

[4] S. Dow, "The Egyptian Cults in Athens," *HThR* 30 (1937) 194.

[5] Roussel, *Les cultes égyptiens* 253.

[6] *Ibid.*, 100.

[7] *Ibid.*, 84.

one out of 9.[8] Among the *enatistai* who worshiped Isis there were 24 men and no women.[9]

From Pompeii come 14 inscriptions 2 of which or 14.3% mention women. One of these is an inscription consisting of the names of the father, mother, and son of the family that built the second Iseum at Pompeii with their own money after an earthquake had destroyed the first one.[10] The three names were inscribed on the pavement of the *ecclesiasterion* of the temple. Pompeii is unique in the sense that while it has yielded very few inscriptions concerning the Isiac cult, a rich treasure of wall paintings and frescoes and other *objets d'art* have preserved many traces of the cult and have shown that Pompeii was an active cult center. These monuments as catalogued by Tran Tam Tinh depict male priests or devotees in 17 instances and their female counterparts in 12 instances. In addition several of the houses of Pompeii had lararia in which traces of the Egyptian gods are preserved,[11] and other houses such as that of Acceptus and Euhodia[12] give other indications that whole families were devoted to the Isiac cult. A definite discrepancy exists here, then, between the inscriptions and the anepigraphic monuments in regard to the proportion of women adherents for it would seem from the anepigraphic monuments that female priests were far more numerous than the inscriptions would indicate. There is one point to remember in this connection, however, and that is that while inscriptions in every case represent an actual person, the anepigraphic monuments, except for sepulchral monuments with portrait representations, which do not enter into the instances just mentioned from Pompeii, can represent actual persons, or, on the other hand, can be merely decorative representations of hypothetical situations. Every woman represented on these anepigraphic monuments need not have been an actual person. Yet Isis priestesses were apparently not a very unusual sight at Pompeii.

As to other major cult centers aside from Pompeii, it is impossible to establish any such correlation between the inscriptions and the anepigraphic monuments for two main reasons : 1) no complete catalogue

[8] *Ibid.*, 158.

[9] *Ibid.*, 253-54.

[10] VS 484=CIL 10.848; Tran Tam Tinh, *Essai* 41.

[11] Tran Tam Tinh, *Essai* 49, 51-53.

[12] *Ibid.*, 51, #27, pl. XIV, 2.

of the anepigraphic monuments of the Isiac cult exists; 2) it is difficult in several instances to determine the origin of these monuments because of the neglect given this information by very early archaeologists. The problem of assigning dates to some archaeological remains would also come into play whereas at Pompeii we are dealing with a fairly well-defined, rather brief period of time.

Aside from the inscriptions, perhaps the only other reliable evidence for the proportion of women involved in the cult can be found in descriptions or representations of Isiac processions or festivals, especially in the picture painted by Apuleius in the eleventh book of the *Metamorphoses*. Even in that description it is difficult to say whether men or women composed the bulk of the procession since no numbers are given. All of the principal priests were male; no mention is made of an Isis priestess. The procession was led, however, by women dressed in white vestments, apparently four groups of them as differentiated by the objects they carried and the gestures they made. Next came a group carrying various types of lights; it was composed of men as well as women. The sex of the instrumentalists and the singers is not indicated, but the initiates, we are told, consisted of a throng of both men and women of all stations in life. Women, it seems, were well represented in this procession.

From Corinth, at whose port of Kenchreae the *navigium Isidis* described by Apuleius took place, come only 3 inscriptions, one of which is an inscription by a woman to Sarapis and Isis (VS 34a). One can scarcely draw conclusions from so few inscriptions. Clement of Alexandria[13] who witnessed an Isiac procession makes no mention of women nor does Porphyry[14] in his naming of the various priests of the Egyptian gods. The frescoes from Herculaneum, however, help somewhat in this regard since we find that women did participate in the festivals there. One fresco,[15] for example, shows a priestess evidently playing a major part in the festival, and, in addition, several women were represented as participants in the chorus. In a second fresco[16] while a masked

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[13] Clem. Alex., *Strom.* 6.35-37.

[14] Porph., *Abst.* 4.8.

[15] Tran Tam Tinh, *Essai* 27, pl. XXIII.

[16] *Ibid.*, 27-28, pl. XXIV.

person performs a sacred dance, a small group of the faithful, including at least two women and one young girl, face toward the dancer, shaking their sistra while standing or kneeling. Thus, we are still left with the inscriptions for the most part to form certain conclusions as to the proportion of women in the cult.

On the basis of the inscriptions alone it can be concluded, then, that on the whole women composed a distinct minority of the devotees of the Egyptian gods outside of Egypt. In two major cult centers, Athens and Rome, however, women were represented in much greater numbers than they were in any other place. (It must be noted here that not every inscription mentions an individual devotee, as, for example, when a college of devotees is mentioned, and no indication of the sex of the members is given, or when the name of the dedicant is not given. And frequently men and women are named in the same inscription. Thus, it cannot be assumed that because 48.6% of the inscriptions from Athens mention women, 51.4% mention men. In fact, at Athens 23 inscriptions, or 65.7% of them, name men who were adherents of the cult.) On mainland Greece and in Italy women devotees also appeared with greater frequency than they did on the Greek islands, in Asia and Asia Minor, and in the provinces of Europe and Africa. From mainland Greece 40 of 146 inscriptions or 27.4% mention women affiliated with the Isiac cult; in Italy the figure is 78 of 291 inscriptions or 26.8%.

Some general conclusions can also be made in regard to the dating of inscriptions concerning women adherents of the cult. The oldest dated inscription mentioning a woman, and, in fact, the oldest inscription of the Egyptian gods outside of Egypt, comes from Halicarnassus and belongs to the end of the fourth or beginning of the third century B.C. (VS 269).[17] It is a dedication made by a husband and a wife for themselves and their children to Sarapis and Isis. The latest inscription mentioning a woman is from Rome dated in the year 390 A.D., naming a priestess of Isis (VS 447=CIL 6.512). Between these two dates most of the dated inscriptions fall within the time period from the second century B.C. to the second century A.D. The following is the breakdown according to time periods of dated inscriptions mentioning women.

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[17] Fraser, *Opusc. Athen.* 3 (1960) 34 n. 1.

end of 4th-beginning of 3rd cent. B.C.	1
3rd or 3rd/2nd cent. B.C.	10
2nd or 2nd/1st cent. B.C.	24
1st cent. B.C.	25
1st or 1st/2nd cent. A.D.	20
2nd or 2nd/3rd cent. A.D.	33
3rd cent. A.D.	11
4th cent. A.D.	2

Three inscriptions are dated generally in the Hellenistic period, 3 in the Roman period, and 7 in the imperial age. The remaining inscriptions are not dated. Inscriptions from Delos form a great part of those dated in the first and second centuries B.C. In the second century B.C. 16 of the 24 inscriptions are from Delos; in the first century 11 of the 25 are from Delos.

The oldest inscription from Italy mentioning a woman adherent is one from Rome dated before the middle of the first century B.C. (VS 377=CIL 6.2247). The inscription is a listing of the members of the *gens Caecilia* among whom is *T. Sulpicius T.f., sacerdos Isidis Capitolinae.* Also mentioned is *Polla Caecilia Spuri filia* with no further description. Fortunately, an inscription recently found in Thessalonica (VS 111a) dating from the first century B.C. names the same woman, this time called Caecilia Polla, making a dedication to Sarapis and Isis.[18] An inscription from Tauromenium (VS 513=IG 14.433) dating from the third/second century B.C. describes the dedication of an altar to Vesta, here identified with Isis, by a man, his wife, and daughter. Nothing indicates how involved the wife and daughter were in the cult of Isis though they may well have been adherents themselves. An inscription from Syracuse (VS 516=IG 14.14a) attributed to the second century B.C. does indeed mention a woman (. . . *ἀδα τὰν αὐτ[οῦ γ]υναῖκα*), but the sketchiness of the inscription prevents a conclusion as to whether she was a cult adherent. The proposal of G. Manganaro[19] would not necessarily make her an adherent but simply the object of an honor together with her husband. All other Italian inscriptions concerning

[18] Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis* 99.

[19] G. Manganaro, "Ricerche di epigrafia siceliota," *Siculorum Gymnasium* 14 (1961) 176-77.

women date from the centuries after Christ, the greatest number (10) appearing in the first century A.D.; after that each successive century produced a decreasing number of Italian inscriptions (second century A.D.-8; third century A.D.-6; fourth century A.D.-2).

The inscriptions of Athens were scattered over a broad span of time, the earliest of them dating from 215-214 B.C. (VS 2=IG $2/3^2$.1292). From mainland Greece two inscriptions mentioning the same woman are the oldest, dating from the third century B.C. (VS 76, 77=IG 12 Suppl. 567, 568). They are both thank-offerings by a man and a woman to Sarapis, Isis, and Anubis. The inscriptions of all of mainland Greece just as in Athens are also scattered over a broad period of time.

While women do not appear to have formed a majority of the adherents of the cults, they were more involved in the oriental cults generally and in the Isiac cult specifically than in the traditional state religions. Their participation in many instances alongside men and in the same type of priestly offices as men was perhaps the reason that ancient authors, and after them modern scholars, gave attention to women adherents of the Isiac cult; the fact that women played a part at all in the religion was noteworthy.

A number of inscriptions, archaeological findings, and literary references witness to the presence of women in the organization of the Isiac religion. Not only were women members of lay associations of varying degrees of unity and responsibility, but they also participated to some extent in the priesthood. Despite the statement by Herodotus[20] that no woman exercised the priestly office in Egypt, there is proof for female priests in Egypt, and in some cases priestesses devoted to Isis and Osiris.[21] We have already mentioned that the parts of Isis and Nephthys in the drama representing the death and resurrection of Osiris as recorded in "The Songs of Isis and Nephthys" were played by virgin priestesses. While in many instances in the Graeco-Roman world, in which women are merely referred to as priestesses or appear dressed in the priestly garb, it is impossible to define more precisely

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[20] Hdt. 2.35 : *ἱρῆται γυνὴ μὲν οὐδεμία οὔτε ἔρσενος θεοῦ οὔτε θηλέης, ἄνδρες δὲ πάντων τε καὶ πασέων.*

[21] A. M. Blackman, "On the Position of Women in the Ancient Egyptian Hierarchy," *JEA* 7 (1921) 8-30; Tran Tam Tinh, *Essai* 96 and n. 2.

the nature of the priesthood involved, there are cases in which particular designations are given to the individual. The names of the various degrees of the priestly hierarchy are in general similar to those used in other cults.

Not a great deal is known about the precise nature of the hierarchy in the Egyptian religion as it appeared in the Graeco-Roman world. Recently, however, L. Vidman, on the basis of his organization of inscriptional evidence, has made fresh observations on several aspects of the priesthood.[22] The earliest inscriptions indicate that the first priests of the Egyptian gods in the Greek world were frequently native Egyptians who had assumed the priestly office for a lifetime. As the cult became officially recognized by the state, the inscriptions show that there arose Greek priests who followed the Greek custom of remaining in office for one year. This was not a hard and fast rule, for sometimes the oldest proofs for the cult in a certain city in the Greek sphere, Rhodes for example, reveal yearly priests; on the other hand, hereditary, therefore permanent, priests appear in inscriptions from the empire.[23] In the third-century A.D. romance by Heliodorus, the *Aethiopica*, a certain Calasiris was a priest of Isis as were also his two sons (though one of them had abandoned his priesthood)[24] indicating that at this late date the priesthood was in some cases still hereditary.

It is striking, says Vidman, that we find no Isis priestess before imperial times.[25] This statement refers to priestesses of a higher rank who were designated by the term ἱέρεια (in Latin *sacerdos*) or its verbal equivalent. Of this term Cumont says :

> Ce nom désigne ceux qui ont reçu la prêtrise, qui ont pris la robe blanche de lin, et ce clergé supérieur, auquel est réservé l'accés de l'adyton, s'oppose à la foule des desservants inférieurs ou serviteurs qui peuplent le temple.[26]

Then the canephors who are mentioned in inscriptions in the first and second centuries B.C. at Delos and Athens do not stand in contradiction

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[22] Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis*, ch. 3, "Priester und Priesterkollegien," 48-65.

[23] VS 340=CIG 4365, an inscription of ca. 217 A.D. from Termessus : ἱερέως Σαράπιδος διὰ βίου.

[24] Hld., *Aeth.* 1.18.5.

[25] Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis* 49.

[26] F. Cumont, *L'Égypte des astrologues* (Brussels 1937) 118-19.

to Vidman's statement since they were priestesses or ministers of a secondary order. This absence of Isis priestesses before the empire may, as has been noted, be attributed to the greater popularity of Sarapis in the initial appearance of the cult in the Greek sphere.[27] It was not until imperial times and particularly in the Roman world that Isis rose to great heights of popularity. Malaise[28] has established that two hundred eleven or sixty percent of the inscriptions from Italy mention Isis while only one hundred sixteen or thirty-two percent mention Sarapis.

Two further observations may be made that relate to the absence of Isis priestesses during the period of Sarapis's popularity. First of all, in all but one instance women were called priestesses of Isis, rather than priestesses of Sarapis or of Isis and Sarapis. The one exception is the inscription on a fragment of a marble sarcophagus from Rome (VS 433=CIL 6.32458; second/third century A.D.) wherein a girl named Alexandria is called priestess of Ogygian Bacchus, where Bacchus is equated with Osiris, and pastophor of the goddess of the Nile. (A canephor of Sarapis is known from the inscriptions [VS 8=IG $2/3^2$.3498] and likewise two canephors of Sarapis and Isis [VS 20=IG $2/3^2$.3565;VS CE 187], but this was considered a priesthood of the secondary rank.) From the archaeological sphere there is no monument that depicts a priestess garbed in such a way or carrying such an object that she may be said to have been a priestess of Sarapis or Osiris. It is generally believed that whether one was called a priest of Sarapis or a priest of Isis made little professional difference since the priest served the whole family of gods.[29] Then, the fact that priestesses were in nearly every case called priestesses of Isis rather than of Sarapis was probably little more than a manifestation of the popularity of Isis.

Closely connected with this is the fact that a greater number of Isis priestesses existed in the Roman than the Greek sphere.[30] It is of interest in this regard to glance at the index in Vidman's collection of inscriptions under the heading *sacerdos* (p. 350). This will show that in the

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[27] Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis* 49.

[28] Malaise, *Les conditions de pénétration* 160.

[29] Tran Tam Tinh, *Essai* 97; Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis* 42.

[30] Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis* 49.

Latin inscriptions there is only one instance of a priest of Sarapis (VS 786=CIL 8.2629)., and in that case the individual is called a priest of Jupiter-Pluto-Sarapis, suggesting the syncretistic tendencies of the time. An inscription from Acerrae mentions a priest of Isis and Sarapis together (VS 501=CIL 10.3759). The overwhelming majority of priests mentioned in the Latin inscriptions were designated as priests of Isis. Again using Vidman's Latin index we can count 25 priests or priestesses of Isis. Quite the opposite is true in the Greek inscriptions where many more priests of Sarapis (67) are named than priests of Isis (16). Again, the frequency of Isis priestesses seems to have risen in proportion to the goddess's popularity.

The earliest priestesses date from the first century A.D. and are geographically widespread. From Rome comes a funeral dedication to Cantina Procla who in the inscription bears no title other than that of a loyal and well-deserving wife (VS 448=CIL 6.34776). But on the marble altar where the inscription appears is a woman carrying a situla and a sistrum, and on both sides is the *cista mystica* from which a serpent crawls. The inscription dates from the Flavian period (69-96 A.D.). From Boeotian Thespiae comes an inscription (VS 54=IG 7.1869) dated generally in the first century A.D. naming a woman who had been a priestess of Isis (ἱερατεύσασαν Ἴσιδος). Two inscriptions are dated at the end of the first century A.D. : one from Athens (VS 13=IG $2/3^2$.6311) in which a woman is named and a priestess of Isis is depicted; and one from Aeclanum in southern Italy (VS 469=CIL 9.1153) naming Cantria Longina who in addition to being a priestess of Diva Julia, the daughter of Titus, and of Cybele was also a priestess of Isis.

Of the dated inscriptions mentioning Isis priestesses the second century A.D. seems to have produced the greatest number. The following is the breakdown according to centuries.

1st or 1st-2nd cent. A.D.	4
2nd or 2nd-3rd cent. A.D.	9
3rd cent. A.D.	2
4th cent. A.D.	1

Two of the remaining inscriptions belong to the imperial age, one to the Roman period. The others are not dated.

As might be expected, Athens and Rome produced the greatest number

of priestesses as far as individual cities are concerned; 5 inscriptions from Athens name Isis priestesses and 7 from Rome. From Rome also comes a portrayal of an Isis priestess on a marble altar in the inscription of which no woman is named (VS 387=CIL 6.345). In addition 4 other priestesses appeared on the Greek mainland, 3 in other cities in Italy, and 4 in the provinces of Europe and Africa. One priestess appeared on the island of Imbros, and 2 others in the cities of Asia Minor.

Among Isis priestesses there is evidence for both permanent and yearly duties. In the several instances in which a woman is portrayed on her tombstone in the garb of an Isis priestess, and no further indication appears in the inscription, it may be assumed that she was a priestess of Isis until her death.[31] Several such tombstones occur in Athens and Rome.[32] Vidman[33] has called attention to other inscriptions the contexts of which indicate that certain Isis priestesses served for a lifetime. A previously mentioned inscription from Megalopolis (VS 42=IG 5.2472), for example, honors Dionysia who was chosen at the age of fifteen by Isis to be her servant (λάτρις). In this capacity Dionysia lived for forty-five years and died at the age of sixty, still in the service of the goddess. An inscription from Chaeronea (VS 62 = IG 7.3426) explicitly designates a woman a "priestess for life of Taposiris Isis" (ἱέρειαν διὰ βίου τῆς ταποσειριάδος Ἴσιδος). From Bracara Augusta in Spain comes an inscription (VS 760=CIL 2.2416) in which a woman making a dedication to Isis is called *sacerdos perpetua.* In other cases indication of the duration of the priesthood is not so explicit. There is the implication from an inscription from Sinope (VS 330=CIG 4157) that a certain Claudia Paula, priestess of the goddess Isis, held her office for longer than one year. The inscription is set up to Claudia's brother who filled several offices during his lifetime while Claudia is simply called ἱερείας θεᾶς Ἴσιδος. Likewise, the context of an inscription from Sulmo (VS 473=CIL 9.3091) indicates a lifelong priestess of Isis. All of these inscriptions date from the second or third century A.D.

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[31] *Ibid.*

[32] From Athens: VS 13=IG 3.2199; VS 18=IG 3.1898; VS 23=IG 3.2723; VS 24=IG 3.1340. From Rome: VS 387=CIL 6.345; VS 433=CIL 6.32458; VS 446=CIL 6.13454; VS 448=CIL 6.34776; VS 452=CIL 6.18442; VS 453. These do not include uninscribed funereal monuments.

[33] Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis* 49.

(That from Sulmo is undated.) Examples of priestesses who had filled a yearly office occur in an inscription from Thespiae (VS 54=IG 7.1869) in which the boule and deme honored Mnasippa who was designated as ἱερατεύσασα Ἴσιδος, in an inscription from Imbros (VS 264=IG 12.8.81) in which a woman is mentioned as ἴερεια γενομένη τὸ β', and in an inscription from Athens (VS 30=IG 2/3².1950). The inscription from Thespiae is dated in the first century A.D., that from Imbros is only dated generally in imperial times, and that from Athens in the mid-third century A.D.

In the Greek sphere, then, one can say that the earliest example of an Isis priestess whose duration of office is discernible is a priestess who held office for a year. At a later period examples of lifelong priestesses seem to be more in evidence, while in the Roman sphere we find only permanent Isis priestesses. From the inscriptions mentioned above regarding the duration of office of Isis priestesses Vidman concludes that "among the Isis priestesses who are first in evidence in the empire the Greek tradition of the yearly change of the priestly dignity was very strongly effective; if one does not consider the lifelong priestesses as an exception, however, they still did not form the preponderant majority."[34] This he compares to the fact that among male priests the lifelong priesthood of Sarapis was an exception.

Vidman does not seem to give much attention in his conclusions to funereal monuments on which women are represented as Isis priestesses. This, is perhaps, because he has concentrated almost solely on the epigraphical evidence. In assuming that such representations indicate that the women buried there were Isis priestesses until their death, we must also assume that they were lifelong rather than yearly Isis priestesses. It can scarcely be coincidental that four Isis priestesses in Athens alone would die in the very year of their priesthood. The earliest of these representations appears on a small marble shrine from Athens from the end of the first century A.D. (VS 13=IG 3.2199). The other three monuments, all from Athens, on which such representations appear

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[34] *Ibid.*, 50 : "So war auch bei den Isispriesterinnen, die erst in der Kaiserzeit belegt sind, die griechische Tradition des jährlichen Wechsels der Priesterwürde sehr stark wirksam; wenn man die Priesterinnen auf Lebenszeit nicht als Ausnahme werten will, so bildeten sie doch nicht die überwiegende Mehrheit."

date from the second century A.D.[35] The few inscriptions in evidence from the earliest period of priestesses, however, and the lack of any literary or further archaeological proof make it scarcely possible to draw any definite conclusions in regard to these priestesses, especially the conclusion that the tradition of the yearly change of office was very strong or that lifelong priestesses did not form the preponderant majority. If a conclusion need be drawn, it must be that there is more evidence, both in the early and later period and in the East and the West for lifelong priestesses of Isis. However little is known about the earliest period in the existence of Isis priestesses, it can be said that at a later period, i.e. from the second century A.D. on, particularly in the West, Isis priestesses held their offices for a lifetime.

In addition to epigraphical references to the hierarchy of the Egyptian deities, there are three chief literary sources : Apuleius, Clement of Alexandria, and Porphyry. While several of the participants in the processions in Apuleius were not given a specific title, he does mention the *antistites sacrorum*[36] and the *sacerdos*.[37] At other points in the *Isis-buch* Apuleius speaks of the *sacerdos egregius*,[38] the *summus sacerdos*,[38] the *sacerdos maximus*,[39] the *grammateus*,[39] the *collegium sacrosanctum pastophorum*,[39] and the *primarius sacerdos*.[40] Clement of Alexandria who witnessed a procession speaks of the following priests in ascending order of importance : ὠδός, ὡροσκόπος, ἱερογραμματεύς, στολιστής, and προφήτης.[41] Porphyry's listing is similar to that of Clement except that he mentions some additional lower priests : προφήτης, ἱεροστολιστής, ἱερογραμματεύς, ὡρολόγος, παστοφόρος, and νεωκόρος.[42] From the inscriptions we learn of other types of priests, among them the ζάκορος, κανηφόρος, κλειδοῦχος, ὀνειροκρίτης, καμεινευτής, ἱεροδοῦλος, and ἱερόφωνος. From among all of these it is possible to establish an order of rank. The prophet, generally speaking, was the

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[35] See n. 32 *supra*.

[36] Apul., *Met.* 11.10.

[37] *Ibid.*, 11.12.

[38] *Ibid.*, 11.16.

[39] *Ibid.*, 11.17.

[40] *Ibid.*, 11.21.

[41] Clem. Alex., *Strom.* 6.35-37.

[42] Porph., *Abst.* 4.8.

chief priest, although such an important cult center as Kenchreae, as we learn from Apuleius, seems to have had more than one chief priest, with various names such as *egregius sacerdos*, *summus sacerdos*, *maximus sacerdos*, and *primarius sacerdos*. After the prophets the highest position was held by the stolists who were responsible for clothing and otherwise adorning the statues of the gods. The scribes, astrologers, and singers in that order completed the classifications of the high priests. The pastophors, also called hierophors or hagiophors, were the highest ranking of the lower priests. It was their responsibility to carry the statues of the gods in the processions.[43] Although some scholars place the neocorus in a comparatively important position among the secondary priests, a further ranking of the lower priests is difficult. Even in regard to the *neocorus*, a functionary of Greek origin, there is controversy as to whether he was ranked among the higher or lower priests. Lafaye[44] placed the *neocorus* among the lower priests, while Cumont[45] and Tran Tam Tinh[46] would make him one of the higher priests, although Tran Tam Tinh concedes that ancient authors were not always in agreement on the rank

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[43] Most recently Malaise, *Les conditions de pénétration* 128-30, has opposed this traditionally held theory. According to him there is no indication that the carrying of divine statues was the task of the pastophors. In his opinion the word παστός signifies an embroidered curtain or drapery. In Graeco-Egyptian documents παστοφόρος is the equivalent of the Egyptian ωη, "the one who opens." So the pastophor was charged with opening the sanctuary during ceremonies. They were not members of the sacerdotal class properly called, but the position in regard to the cult must be important. In Italy, according to Malaise, the title no longer seemed to correspond to the precise function. In Apul., *Met.* 11.27 and 30, for example, the person charged with initiating Lucius at Rome was a pastophor, thus the meaning of the term was extended to the point of being able to be applied to a member of the true clergy. For Malaise, the existence of the *corpus pausariorum* (VS 400=CIL 6.348) is the final proof that the pastophors did not carry divine images in the processions because the *corpus* performed this function.

[44] Lafaye, *Histoire du culte* 140.

[45] Cumont, *L'Égypte des astrologues* 123. Cumont rejects as untrue a phrase by Porphyry which leads one to believe that the *neocori* were lower officials (*Abst.* 4.8 : τὸ δὲ λοιπὸν ἱερέων τε καὶ παστοφόρων καὶ νεωκόρων πλῆθος καὶ ὑπουργῶν τοῖς θεοῖς). Cumont cites several instances in which the *neocori* were mentioned in connection with higher priests, namely Firm. Mat., *Err. prof. rel.* 1.144.25, 1.225.22, 1.230.29, 2.267.18, 2.307.22; Manetho 4.430.

[46] Tran Tam Tinh, *Essai* 92.

of the neocorus. Vidman[47] shows that there was a definite change in the character of this function. In his first appearances at Athens and Delos, the *neocorus* was a guardian of the temple and was responsible for its upkeep. That the function was not an important one is evidenced by the fact that at Athens a foreigner rather than an Athenian citizen filled it.[48] Eventually, at the earliest in the second century A.D., the *neocorus* became a highly placed individual who held the official title *νεωκόρος τοῦ μεγάλου Σαράπιδος*. Vidman notes that W. Otto[49] has already correctly concluded that it was at this period very often an honorary title bestowed on men who had filled a secular office in an outstanding way. Yet Vidman[50] would rank the *neocori* among the lower priesthood, and this seems correct especially in view of the position of the *neocorus* when named in inscriptions.

In general, relying on the information from the inscriptions and from ancient literature, while many women had the title of *ἱέρεια* or *sacerdos* indicating that they participated in the higher priesthood (the inscriptions name 28 such women)[51], they filled very few of the highest ranking positions in the hierarchy. This rule varied, it can be assumed, in proportion to the importance and size of the individual center. In a center where the cult personnel consisted only of a chief priest and one or two assistants, a woman who was an assistant could technically be said to hold a high position since she probably assisted the chief priest in various sacrificial duties. Yet such an assistant would not ordinarily have a title corresponding to the highest positions in the cult. On the other hand, a large cult center such as Rome could be expected to have numerous persons attached to the temples. The absence or presence of women in the highest positions there would indicate more precisely the degree of influence the female element had in the cult.

There is no known instance of a woman said to fill or have filled the role of the chief priest of a temple. It is possible, perhaps, that one of

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[47] Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis* 57-58.

[48] *Ibid.*, 54.

[49] W. Otto, *Priester und Tempel im hellenistischen Ägypten* (Leipzig and Berlin 1905) 1.113-14.

[50] Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis* 64.

[51] Twenty-six people in Italy had the title of *sacerdos*, six of whom were women. See Malaise, *Les conditions de pénétration* 127 n. 1.

those priestesses with the simple title ἱέρεια or *sacerdos* could have performed this function, but if this were the case, it would seem more likely that a further qualification would be attached to the title of a person in so high a position. Yet the very infrequent mention of the prophet or chief priest at all in literature and inscriptions is in itself surprising.[52] The only function of the high priesthood definitely mentioned in the inscriptions or literature in connection with women is that of stolist. An inscription from Nemausus, present-day Nîmes, dating from the second century A.D. speaks of the paying of a vow to Isis by a woman designated as *ornatrix fani*, a term comparable to stolist.[53] In an inscription from Megalopolis (VS 42=IG 5.2.472) dated in the second/third century A.D. a female stolist is mentioned although she has no specific title aside from that of λάτρις.[54] The significance of the position can be understood from the twice-daily ceremony of the opening and closing of the temple.[55] Each morning when the temple was opened, the statue of Isis was robed and adorned with jewels and other ornaments, and each night the ceremony involved the reverse process. Understandably the individual responsible for this duty was important in the cult.

Apuleius in the *Metamorphoses* (11.9) while describing the pomp of the procession of Isis devotees on the occasion of the *navigium Isidis*, mentions some women dressed in white, carrying ivory combs and indicating by the movements of their arms and fingers that they were assigned to dress and adorn the goddess's hair. These women can scarcely be considered priestesses, although their duties seem to correspond partially to that of the stolists. Apuleius is describing the figures of the procession in ascending order of importance. At the very beginning of the procession appeared various groups of women dressed in white, some carrying garlands and scattering flowers, some carrying mirrors, others sprinkling precious ointments along the way. It was among these groups of women that those bearing ivory combs walked. It is more likely that these women

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[52] For the inscriptional evidence for the prophets see VS 359=CIL 3.14165, VS 383=IG 14.961, VS 384=IG 14.1084, VS 434=CIL 6.846, VS 725 =CIL 12.410.

[53] VS 731=CIL 12.3061.

[54] Cf. *supra* p. 75 and n. 37.

[55] For a short bibliography on stolists see Malaise, *Les conditions de pénétration* 118 n. 5.

belonged to some lay cult association which had responsibilities similar to those of the stolists.

If we go beyond the sphere of the inscriptions and look to reliefs, statues, and wall paintings, a good deal of evidence is present as regards the significance of priestesses. A fresco from Herculaneum,[56] for example, which portrays a ceremony taking place before a temple depicts a woman who obviously was a high-ranked priestess. Immediately before the door of the temple stand three individuals—in the middle, a priest with his head completely shaven, reverently holding a vase with hands covered by his cloak, at the right, a dark-skinned priest shaking a sistrum,[57] and at the left, a priestess with a sistrum in the right hand and a situla in the left. In addition, positioned on the stairs at each side is a chorus composed of members of both sexes directed in their singing and shaking of their sistra by another priest. Tran Tam Tinh[58] refers to them as "un chœur de devots," thereby indicating that they were not priests and priestesses, but perhaps members of a cult association.

Another fresco from Herculaneum[59] depicts the intense involvement of women in the musical aspects of an Isiac ceremony. A dancer is portrayed on the top level of a flight of stairs. Behind him are two persons dressed in white, one of them a woman who is playing the tympany. Two persons are kneeling on either side of the altar. The figure on the left is a female seemingly very excited by the dance and the music. With her right hand she vigourously shakes a sistrum. In her left hand she carries a platter of fruits or flowers. She is richly dressed with a crown and a fringed tunic and mantle. On the other side of the altar behind the kneeling figure is a woman shaking a sistrum.

The well-known Vatican relief[60] of an Isiac procession portrays two

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[56] Tran Tam Tinh, *Essai* pl. XXIII; also Witt, *Isis* pl. 23.

[57] For the part played by blacks in the cult of Isis see F. M. Snowden, Jr., *Blacks in Antiquity* (Cambridge, Mass.1970) 189-92 and also his article "Ethiopians and the Isiac Worship," *Antiquité Classique* 25 (1956) 112-16.

[58] Tran Tam Tinh, *Essai* 27. Malaise, *Les conditions de pénétration* 122 concurs and speaks of a similar chorus in Apul., *Met.* 11.9.

[59] V. Tran Tam Tinh, *Le culte des divinités orientales à Herculaneum* (Leiden 1971) 85-86, #59, pl. 41.

[60] W. Helbig, *Führer durch die öffentlichen Sammlungen klassischer Altertümer in Rom* (Tübingen 1963-66) 1.#491; Witt, *Isis* pl. 30.

priestesses in significant positions. Of the four figures represented, the first is a priestess with a lotus flower on her head, a serpent entwined about her left arm, and a situla in her right hand. Following her is a holy scribe holding a scroll in front of him and wearing a falcon headdress. The next individual is a priest, bald, as the preceding priest is, with a mantle on his head, holding in hands covered with his garment a vase. Presumably he was the prophet. Last is another priestess who carries a ladle in her left hand and a sistrum in her right hand. The presence of women in the company of two very high ranking priests indicates that women at least in some localities did indeed have a part in the cult nearly equal to that of men.

No other cult center offers so rich a supply of Isiac religious scenes as does Pompeii with its numerous wall paintings. Several of these wall paintings give evidence that women performed important sacrificial duties. Of great interest is a badly preserved wall painting from the triclinium of the *casa del Centenario*.[61] The central part of the wall of the triclinium is decorated with mythical representations in the midst of several vertical panels which depict on a black background feminine figures dressed in the Greek manner but having Egyptian attributes. In addition to twenty-one feminine figures there is one masculine figure. All but two of these women have on their heads white traces which, according to Tran Tam Tinh, are probably those of lotus flowers. Two of the figures carry a small panel with hieroglyphs on it. While it is tempting to conclude that these women have some connection with the holy scribe, there is no way, of course, to ascertain this, the more so since there is no inscriptional evidence for a female scribe.

Certainly the woman who played the part of Isis in the ceremony of the discovery of Osiris, as depicted by a mural in the temple of Isis at Pompeii[62] was prominent among the cult personnel. Another wall painting,[63] from the *casa delle Nozze d'Ercole* at Pompeii, while its interpretation presents problems, illustrates that priestesses of Isis were significant representatives of the hierarchy. In the midst of a temple is found Venus Pompeiana, to the left Eros, and the right Priapus.

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[61] Tran Tam Tinh, *Essai* #63.

[62] *Ibid.*, #47, pl. X,1.

[63] *Ibid.*, #24, pl. XI, 1, 2.

On the steps leading to the temple a young goddess extends her hand to a young man, recognizable as Heracles, at the bottom of the stairs. On each side of the temple is a procession, that on the left moving away from the temple, that on the right moving toward the temple. At the head of the group walking toward the temple is a priestess of Isis, holding a sistrum in her right hand and in her left an object that resembles a situla. She is richly adorned with a crown and several necklaces and bracelets. The importance she had in the procession is evident from her position at the front of the procession and from the fact that she is represented on a larger scale than those who follow her. Though scholars have attempted to explain her presence at such a festival, generally recognized as being the marriage of Heracles, no satisfactory solution has been reached.[64] What is important here is that it was a priestess rather than a priest who represented the Isiac religion at this festival where several other religious representatives were present.

In some instances at Pompeii both a woman and a man seem to have been representatives of the cult on an equal basis. The wall paintings depicting the receptions of Io by Isis,[65] for example, have both a male and female figure standing behind Isis looking toward Io as if to welcome her officially as representatives of the devotees of Isis. Both figures hold the sistrum in the right hand. The priest holds a caduceus in his left hand while the priestess holds a long baton. Likewise, two silver goblets[66] from Pompeii depict in relief two figures walking, in one case, toward a temple and, in the other, toward an altar. In both cases there is one female and one male figure. On the first goblet the priestess, her head crowned with a serpent, carries a tray on which there is a cake and an ichneumon. The priest carries a censer. On the second goblet the priestess, again with a serpent on her head, carries a sistrum in her right hand and a situla in the left. The priest carries the sacred hydreion. They were evidently involved in sacrificial duties in which priest and priestess performed an equal function.

Several other wall paintings and frescoes from Pompeii depict Isiac

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[64] For a discussion of scholarly opinions on the mural see Tran Tam Tinh, *Essai* 56-58.

[65] Tran Tam Tinh, *Esssai* #14, pl. XVI, 2 and #40, pl. VI.

[66] *Ibid.*, #138.

priestesses with platters of offerings and censers,[67] indicating the participation of these priestesses in sacrificial rites. Similarly, statues of priestesses, one carrying a jar, others genuflecting, have been found at Beneventum reflecting an attitude of humility, such as the priestesses might display when presenting sacred offerings.[68] On the basis of this evidence it seems that in some localities at any rate women participated in the Isiac cult in the same capacities in which men did.

Frequently Isis priestesses were represented in the costume of the goddess herself.[69] At times this has posed problems in distinguishing between statues of the goddess and her priestesses, except in cases of funeral reliefs or statues where facial characteristics are obviously made to resemble the deceased.[70] The costume consisted of a white linen undergarment covered usually by a fringed mantle knotted between the breasts. But this was by no means the only type of garment worn by the priestesses. In the Vatican relief of the procession of priests and priestesses, for example, neither of the two priestesses wore the fringed mantle, and each was dressed differently from the other. At times they wore, hanging over the shoulder, a wide band, sometimes richly adorned as in the case of Galatea[71] where the band has stars and crescent moons on it. The lotus flower, signifying immortality, often appeared on the top of the head. The priestess usually carried some cult object in at least

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[67] *Ibid.*, #7; #36, pl. IV, 4; #46, pl. XVIII, 2; #56; #62; #142, pl. XII, 4.

[68] O. Marucchi, *Notizie degli Scavi du Antichità* (1904) 130.

[69] For statues and other representations of Isis priestesses see Lafaye, *Histoire du culte* #45, #85-89, #113-16, #118, #228; Drexler, "Isis," 492-93; W. Amelung, *Die Sculpturen des Vaticanischen Museums* (Berlin 1903-1908) 1. #119B, #233; Helbig, *Führer* 2.#2092; G. Pietrangeli, *I monumenti dei culti orientali* (Rome 1951) 50, #7; Tran Tam Tinh, *Essai* #7; #14, pl. XVI, 2; #24, pl. XI, 1 2; #36, pl. IV, 4; #40, pl. VI; #46, pl. XVIII, 2; #47, pl. X, 1; #56; #63; #138; #142, pl. XXIII, XXIV. On certain reliefs accompanying the inscriptions women are represented in their Isiac costumes; VS 13=IG 2/3².631, VS 18=IG 2/3².6945, VS 23=IG 2/3². 9697, VS 24=IG 2/3².12418, VS 387 =CIL 6.345, VS 446 =CIL 6.13454, VS 448= CIL 6.34776, VS 452=CIL 6.18442. See also Malaise, *Les conditions de pénétration*, Herculanum 3 and 4, Stabiae 1, Romae 441.

[70] Lafaye, *Histoire du culte*, 259; Tran Tam Tinh, *Essai* 96 n. 4. The statue in the Capitoline Museum, for example, which was for long considered by many to represent Isis, now seems to be thought of as an Isiac. See Tran Tam Tinh, *Campanie* 30-31 n. 3.

[71] Lafaye, *Historie du culte* #115; VS 453; Amelung, *Die Sculpturen* 2.#19.

one hand and frequently in both hands. The sistrum was the most commonly held object and was usually held in the raised right hand. In the left hand a water bucket or jar or a ladle was frequently seen. In the wall paintings from Pompeii priestesses often appear holding a plate of sacrificial offerings. The priestesses and other devotees evidently also wore rings with representations of the Egyptian deities, as is the implication of Pliny the Elder when he complains that in his day even men were beginning to wear such rings.[72]

A number of priestesses of secondary rank are mentioned in the inscriptions. The majority of these secondary priestesses were canephors who are proven inscriptionally only at Athens and Delos.[73] Canephors were Athenian girls from noble families, often daughters of priests who carried holy baskets in the processions and probably performed other temple duties.[74] It was a function filled apparently only by women for there is no evidence of a male canephor. Canephors began to appear in Delos only toward the end of the second century B.C. During the period of Delian independence they are not proven. At Athens the first canephor appeared in the mid-first century B.C. (VS 8=IG 2/3².3498, VS 9=IG 2/3².3727). The appearance of this function and other new functions in the cult corresponds to the completion of a building program by the Athenians, the new rulers of Delos, and to the transfer of their

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[72] Pliny, *Nat. hist.* 33.41 : iam vero et Harpocratem statuasque Aegyptiorum numinum in digitis viri quoque portare incipiunt. Cf. also Pliny, *Nat. hist.* 2.20 : externis famulantur sacris, ac digitis deos gestant.

[73] The position of canephor, however, was not reserved for Isis alone. She appeared likewise in the cult of Arsinoe Philadelphus. Cf. W. Otto, *Priester und Tempel* 1.185.

[74] See Dunand, *Le culte d'Isis* 1.178-79, where she states that the function of canephor had nothing Egyptian in it but must have been borrowed from the cult of Demeter. The canephor of Graeco-Roman Egypt is there described (following P. Perdrizet, *Les terres cuites grecques d'Égypte de la collection Fouquet* [Nancy 1921] pl. CIII #306; E. Breccia, *Monuments de l'Égypte gréco-romaine* [Bergame 1926-34] 2.2, pl. VI.19, pl. LV.279) as a nude or semi-nude woman, whose nudity had a ritual significance. Nudity was a guarantee of bodily purity. Some of these women, however, wore a tunic and had the bust surrounded by a garland of flowers. The canephor held poised on her head with two hands a basket filled with flowers and fruits as votive offerings destined either to bring favor to the crops or to thank the divinity who made them prosper. From the basket emerged a uraeus.

attention to cult personnel.[75] The position was more frequently mentioned at Delos where eleven different canephors were mentioned.[76] From Athens only three canephors are known.[77] The earliest mention of the canephor is in an inscription from Delos set up in 117/16 B.C. by the priest of the same year together with his daughter who was a canephor. From this inscription it is evident that the young woman filled the office for only a year for she was called *κανηφορήσασα*. On the basis of the inscriptions that mention a canephor in relation to the Egyptian gods, it can be said that the office was in every instance held for a year. In several cases, the inscriptions were dated by naming the priest of the year whose name was followed by the names of the cleiduchus, canephor, and zacorus of the year. Otherwise reference was made to the holding of the office in the past time. Both methods point to the yearly change of the canephor. When the cult personnel were named as a means of dating the inscription, the order generally was priest, cleiduchus, canephor, zacorus. In one instance, however, two canephors were mentioned immediately after the priest and before the cleiduchus (VS CE 170). If the cleiduchus was not mentioned, the canephor was named immediately after the priest. Yet in one inscription the zacorus was named before the canephor (VS CE 185). In an inscription from Athens (VS 19=IG $2/3^2$. 3564) mentioning a canephor, a cleiduchus was honored, and the dating formula followed the pattern : priest, stolist, canephor.

In the Herculaneum fresco portraying a dancer there appeared a young girl whom Tran Tam Tinh refers to as a canephor.[78] Dressed like another woman in the fresco in a richly-fringed mantle and tunic, she carries on her head a large basket balancing it there with her left hand. In her right hand she holds a pitcher. This is the only visual representation thus far identified as a canephor.

The difficulty of precisely defining the duties of the canephor and of

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[75] Dow, *HThR* 30 (1937) 204-206.

[76] VS CE 112 and 112 bis (same canephor mentioned in both), CE 135, CE 141, CE 156, CE 158, CE 164 and CE 165 (same canephor mentioned in both), CE 170, CE 171, CE 173a, 173b, and 174 (same canephor mentioned in these last three), CE 185, CE 187.

[77] VS 8=IG $2/3^2$.3498 and VS 9=IG $2/3^2$.3727 (same canephor in both), VS 19= IG $2/3^2$.3564, VS 20=IG $2/3^2$.3565.

[78] Tran Tam Tinh, *Le culte ... à Herculaneum* 86, #59, pl. 41.

describing her clothing and the objects she carried prevents one from estimating her significance and influence within the cult. The fact that canephors were the only temple officials named at Delos besides the priest, the cleiduchus, and the zacorus leads one to believe that they performed some other duty besides carrying baskets in the processions. Of the office one can only agree with Roussel who says of the canephors at Delos :

> Les canéphores, jeunes Athéniennes de qualité, sont les seuls personnages féminins nommés à côté du prêtre, du cleidouque et du zacore. On peut croire, mais rien ne l'assure, qu'elles étaient plus spécialement attachées au service d'Isis. Du moins est-il vraisemblable que la canéphore annuelle n'avait point l'unique tâche de porter la corbeille sacrée à quelque pompe solennelle; pendant l'année entière elle s'acquittait d'un office qui demeure, pour nous, mal déterminé.[79]

Other women who carried various cult objects in the processions were designated in some instances as secondary priestesses. The statues of the gods were carried in these processions by the pastophors who occur in Latin inscriptions. Their equivalents in the Greek inscriptions were the hierophors and the hagiophors who never occur in the Latin inscriptions.[80] From the Greek sphere there are three women hieraphors known from the inscriptions. An inscription from Thebes (VS 52=IG 7.2681) dated only generally in the imperial age mentions a hieraphor Neikaro. The woman to whom a stela was set up in Chaeronea (VS 62=IG 7.3426) in the first part of the third century A.D. seems to have held two positions in connection with the cult of Isis for among her merits are listed "most chaste hieraphor of holy Isis" and "priestess for life of Taposiris Isis." In an inscription from Pergamum (VS 313= SIG^2.754) dated with some question in the first century A.D., two hieraphors, one of them a woman, Tullia Spendusa, dedicated images of Isis and the gods associated with her and also various ornaments for the goddess. Of the seven Greek inscriptions mentioning hagiophors or hieraphors, then, (this includes an inscription naming a bomophor who carried an altar) three of them concern women hieraphors. Of the five Latin inscriptions mentioning pastophors only one names a woman

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[79] Roussel, *Les cultes égyptiens* 269.

[80] Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis* 61.

pastophor. That inscription appears on a fragment of a marble sarcophagus from Rome (VS 433 =CIL 6.32458) from the second or third century A.D. On the right side of the sarcophagus is the figure of a girl pastophor. The epitaph in verse appears in both Latin and Greek. The girl buried there was Alexandria, a priestess of Ogygian Bacchus and a constantly chaste pastophor of Isis.

Other priestesses carried lamps or torches or other types of lights in the processions. Apuleius counted the lamp bearer among the principal priests in charge of sacrifice, describing the object that he carried thus :

> quorum primus lucernam claro praemicantem porrigebat
> lumine, non adeo nostris illis consimilem quae
> vespertinas illuminant epulas, sed aureum cymbium
> medio sui patore flammulam suscitans largiorem.[81]

From the inscriptions we know of the two female light-bearers, each designated by a different title. In Athens about the year 120 A.D. the daughter of a stolist set up among other things a column and a statue to Isis, adorning the statue with the proper garments and ornaments (VS 16=IG 2/3².4771). The woman was designated as λυχνάπτρια καὶ ὀνειροκρίτις of the goddess. An inscription from Delos (VS CE 175C), actually a catalogue of subscribers, names three female light-bearers, each one called a λαμπτηροφόρος. The same inscription mentions yet another woman designated as ὀνειροκρίτις. So in addition to two female lightbearers we know of two female dream interpreters. As compared with evidence for male functionaries with the same duties it can be said that in the inscriptions no male light-bearers are mentioned. We know, however, that they did exist since Apuleius mentioned light-bearers of both sexes. In addition an Isiac altar from Rome depicts in relief on one of its sides two priests, one holding and apparently reading from an open scroll, the other holding a lighted torch.[82] Likewise, a relief on a situla from Pompeii[83] depicts an Egyptian religious scene with two women in the midst of altars and pedestals. One of these women, her head covered with a brooding vulture, faces a pedestal topped with a serpent. Leaning against this pedestal is an upside down torch, ap-

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[81] Apul., *Met.* 11.10.

[82] Witt, *Isis* pl. 50.

[83] Tran Tam Tinh, *Essai* #142, pl. XII, 4.

parently carried toward the altar and left there while sacrifices were made. As for male dream interpreters, seven are mentioned in the inscriptions, but it is interesting to note that all of these inscriptions originate from Delos.[84]

A very strong laity was a characteristic of the Isiac cult. The union of devotees in cult associations was responsible for this strength. The ordinary devotees of the cult may be divided into three levels.[85] the lowest level was composed of simple believers who were organized either not at all or into a very loose unit; the middle level was composed of devotees who were joined in a strongly organized cult association directed by a priest; at the highest level were those who performed such high functions in the cult association that they were frequently confused or equated with priests; to this last category initiates seem to have belonged.

Women are sometimes mentioned as members of these cult associations. There were various names for the cult associations. Typically Greek are those that end in *-σταί*, such as *Sarapiastai.* In the oldest evidence of Athenian private associations of *Sarapiastai* dating from 215/14 B.C. (VS 2=IG 2/3².1292), a woman quite remarkably, is honored as head of the *Sarapiastai.* Named *Νικίππη*, she is designated as *προεραν(σ)τρια.* This was the first appearance of the office of proeranistria.[86] Though the title proeranistria by itself might signify head of the female members of the society, its position in the list indicates that she was head of the male members also.[87] That she was the last to be praised in the decree proper, however, and was praised briefly at that, has led Dow to believe that her headship had become, or always was, merely nominal.[88] He further conjectures that a gradual change of attitude as regards what was proper for priestesses may have allowed this nominal headship of a society by a woman. She had perhaps attained this position by founding the society or by making large gifts to it.[89]

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[84] VS CE 64, 84, 119, 120, 123, 169, 201.

[85] Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis* 66.

[86] VS 2 commentary.

[87] Dow, *HThR* 30 (1937) 194.

[88] *Ibid.*

[89] *Ibid.*, 195.

From Delos come two inscriptions also of a very early date naming women as members of two different cult associations. The first (VS CE 2=IG 11.4.1216-1222) is dated at the end of the third or beginning of the second century B.C. A college of therapeutai is mentioned among whose members was a woman.[90] The therapeutai were simple worshipers united in a loose association.[91] While other cult associations disappeared from Delos after 166 B.C., the therapeutai and the melanephors, after an interruption, were the only two to remain.[92] The second inscription from Delos is from before 166 B.C. (VS CE 25=IG 11.4.1227). The association named is *τὸ κοινὸν τῶν δεκαδιστῶν καὶ δεκαδιστριῶν* whose responsibility was to gather and celebrate the tenth day of every month.[93] The members of this particular college consisted of nine men and seven women.

At the end of the Hellenistic time and the beginning of the empire new cult associations appeared that were previously unknown. Among them were the navarchs,[94] a college in which women participated. The navarchs were connected with the feast of the *ploiaphesia*, though precisely how seems uncertain. All three inscriptions mentioning female navarchs are from Eretria and date from the first century B.C. The first is a catalogue of navarchs (VS 80=IG 12 Suppl. 557) consisting of the names of fifty men and forty-five women. The names, according to Vidman, are not infrequently Roman. The second inscription (VS 81=IG 12 Suppl. 558) merely repeats four of the names mentioned in the preceding catalogue. The third inscription (VS 82=IG 12 Suppl. 565), rather than being an enumeration of navarchs, is the dedication of a stela by four persons to Sarapis, Isis, Osiris, Anubis, and Harpocrates. Two of the individuals, Titus Septomius Ptolemaeus and Septomia Antiochis, are designated as navarchs. The two seem to have been brother and sister and were the children of Demo and Damas mentioned in the final line of the inscription.[95]

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[90] Roussel, *Les cultes égyptiens* 253.

[91] Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis* 69.

[92] *Ibid.*

[93] Roussel, *Les cultes égyptiens* 253.

[94] For a detailed discussion of navarchs see Vidman, "Aufsatz Navarchos im Isiskult," *Listy filologické* 89 (1966) 270-77 which he has reproduced in a somewhat revised and abbreviated form in *Isis und Sarapis* 76-87.

[95] Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis* 79 and VS 82 commentary.

All of the remaining women who can definitely be identified with cult associations are named in Latin inscriptions. The Latin inscriptions yield a smaller variety and a lesser number of cult associations devoted to the Egyptian gods than do the Greek.[96] Ordinary believers, sometimes loosely united, corresponding to the Greek therapeutai were designated as *cultores*, a title usually followed by the name of the divinity in question in the genitive. The only inscription in which a female devotee of this type is found is that on the base of a statue of a man reclining with a cup in his hand (VS 451=CIL 6.17985), dated with question in the middle of the third century A.D. The man praises his second wife Flavia as, among other things, *cultrix deae Phariaes casta*, the Pharian goddess being, of course, Isis.

One undated Roman inscription (VS 426=CIL 6.24627) lists several melanephors among whom was Marcia Salvia, a freedwoman. A loosely united association in its first appearances, the melanephors changed, after a disappearance during the initial period of Athenian sovereignty in Delos, into a closed community. This structural transformation is indicated in the inscriptions by a change from the use of the word κοινόν to the word σύνοδος to designate the nature of the association.[97] The melanephors were distinguished from other devotees of the Egyptian gods by their wearing of black garments which identified them with the mourning Isis. Very few inscriptions outside of Delos mention the community of the melanephors or their individual members. Aside from this Roman inscription there is only an early (third century B.C.) mention of the association on a marble stela from Eretria (VS 75=IG 12 Suppl. 571) and another mention of a melanephor from Rome (VS 427=CIL 6.24628).

Peculiar to Latin inscriptions is the term *sacrorum* or *Isidis sacrorum* referring to devotees of the Isis cult. In the great majority of instances this term was applied to women. Specifically, women have this title in ten inscriptions[98] whereas men have it in only three inscriptions.[99] All

[96] Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis* §7.

[97] *Ibid.*, 72.

[98] VS 435=CIL 6.2245; VS 437=CIL 6.2246; VS 440=CIL 6.2279; VS 441=CIL 6.2280; VS 442=CIL 6.2281; VS 443=CIL 6.2282; VS 481=CIL 10.1; VS 587=CIL 11.574; Malaise, *Inventaire* Roma 72=CIL 6.37171; *id.*, *Inventaire* Verona 6=CIL 5.3416.

[99] VS 436=CIL 6.2244; VS 467=CIL 9.6099; VS 592=CIL 11.819.

of these inscriptions naming both men and women are from Italy and eight of them are from Rome. The precise relationship with the cult of those having the title *sacrorum* is difficult to determine. Vidman has noted that their position seems to have been a sort of subject or servile one.[100] They were far from being initiates, since for the most part they belonged to the lower class, and it is known that the cost of initiation into the cult was high.

Rather than using the Greek endings in *-σταί*, associations of devotees in the Latin-speaking world designated their members by terms of the type *Isiacus*, *Anubiacus*, and *Bubastiacus*. (The designation *Isiacus* also occurs in Greek but not from the Hellenistic time.[101]) The inscriptions designate four women as Isiacs. Two of these inscriptions are from Rome (VS 450=CIL 6.1780, VS 450a=CIL 6.36589), one is from Ostia (VS 541=CIL 14.302), and one from Igabrum in Spain (VS 756=CIL 2.1611). Nothing can be deduced by giving attention to the dating of these inscriptions. The earliest (VS 756) is from the first or second century A.D. while the latest (VS 450) is dated in 384 A.D.

A question arises about the character of the duties of the *Isiaci*. They are generally regarded as lay devotees of the cult, but in some ancient authors the word *Isiaci* refers rather to priests. Plutarch, for example, uses the word twice (*DIO* 3 352B and 352C), and in both cases is referring mainly to priests, as is evident from his immediately preceding reference to the hieraphors and stolists and to the wearing of linen and the shaving of hair. But, as Griffiths has noted,[102] "The word [*Ἰσιακός*] implies a follower or devotee or initiate of the goddess (including, especially, the priest) . . ." M. S. Salem[103] has gathered all of the literary references in which the term *Isiaci* appears. For him the word in its substantive use means "priests," but it is more likely, as Vidman has shown,[104] that the world can imply either priest or worshiper depending on the individual case. The same holds true for the inscrip-

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[100] Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis* 89.

[101] *Ibid.*

[102] Griffiths 269.

[103] Salem, *JRS* 28 (1938) 56-59.

[104] Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis* 91.

tions. While in certain instances in the inscriptions the *Isiaci* were merely worshipers, sometimes they appear to have been charged with the duties of lower priests. This, in fact, was true of many lay associations of cult devotees. Frequently, in the case of strongly united associations, it was difficult to distinguish members of the lower priesthood from lay devotees because of the similarity of their duties. In the case of Flaminia Pale who is called *Isiaca Igabrensis* (VS 756), it seems likely that *Isiaca* refers to some sort of lower priesthood because of the mention of her function in connection with a place name.[105] While the character of two of the *Isiacae* (VS 450a and 541) cannot be determined, the well-known Fabia Aconia Paulina (VS 450) is mentioned in another inscription (CIL 6.1779) which indicates that her husband initiated her into all of the mystery religions.[106] Indeed, here several mysteries of which she was an initiate are mentioned. Last among these are the mysteries of Isis. Her position, then, was perhaps higher than most Isiacs because she had been initiated, but there is nothing to indicate that she performed priestly duties. The previously mentioned sarcophagus of Ravenna (VS 586) from the end of the third century A.D., of course, also mentions a woman who had been initiated into the Isiac mysteries by her husband. These two women, then, belonged to the highest class of Isis devotees as did Clea to whom Plutarch addressed his treatise on Isis and Osiris. It was Clea's parents who had consecrated her in the sacred rites,[107] and it seems probable that her parents had been initiates also. The identification of Clea as an initiate is the earliest mention of a female initiate. In the inscriptions female initiates do not appear until the third and fourth centuries A.D. while men are mentioned as initiates already in the first and second centuries A.D.[108] Apuleius described the initiates in the procession to the sea as men and women of every age and class, all dressed in pure white linen; the women had their hair anointed and their heads were covered with pieces of linen, while the heads of the men were completely shaved. Thus, according to these witnesses, women also participated in the highest functions of devotees, that is, in initiation.

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[105] *Ibid.*, 93.

[106] Cf. Festugière, *Monuments Piot* 53 (1963) 135-46.

[107] Plu., *DIO* 35 (364E).

[108] Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis* 138.

While the form *Anubiaca* is never used of a woman, the form *Bubastiaca* is only used of women. As has been pointed out above (pp. 70-72), women were particularly devoted to Isis-Bubastis. Two women are referred to in the inscriptions as *Bubastiaca*, one in Rome (VS 422=CIL 6.3880) and one in Ostia (VS 534=CIL 14.21). It is likely that this title merely referred to membership in a cult association rather than having any sacerdotal significance because of the existence of an inscription in which a woman is specifically called *sacerdos Bubastium* (VS 423= CIL 6.2249). Note also the inscription from Rhodes in which a male priest of Isis and Bubastis is mentioned (VS 173).

Included also among designations of devotees of Isis is the epithet *vera Memfiana* applied to the woman Agrippina in an inscription from Rome (VS 424=CIL 6.11271).[109]

In résumé, the inscriptions from a statistical point of view indicate that on the whole women did not compose so great a number of adherents of the Isiac cult as is often implied. Yet other archaeological remains, particularly those from Pompeii, show that women did participate in processions and festivals to a slightly greater degree than the inscriptions indicate. In at least two cult centers, Athens and Rome, and possibly also at Pompeii, women adherents were far more numerous than at other centers. The fact that women did participate in the religion even to the small extent that they did is in itself significant, however, since their participation in the Greek and Roman religions was very narrowly limited.

When women did participate, in several instances they were allowed to perform the same priestly duties as men. Some offices, however, were apparently not open to them. Isiac priestesses do not occur in the inscriptions until the first century A.D. although before that time secondary priestesses and female members of cult associations are mentioned. In the very earliest inscription of the Egyptian cults outside of Egypt an ordinary female devotee was named. Yet female devotees did not appear in as great a proportion at this early period as to indicate that women were the primary reason for the initial popularity of Isis in the Graeco-Roman world.

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[109] See *supra* p. 63 n. 46. Malaise, *Les conditions de pénétration* 51 suggests that *bere* in this inscription could be a dative in -e of the cognomen Vera.

CHAPTER FIVE

MORALITY AND THE CULT OF ISIS

Until the recent outburst of scholarship on the cult of the Egyptian deities, mention of the goddess Isis seems primarily to have evoked thoughts of the sexual immorality of her adherents. This aspect of the cult has completely overshadowed the deeper, philosophical content of the Isiac religion and the contribution that it made to the development of ethical thought. The blame for the overemphasis on the immorality of the cult and especially of its female devotees can be placed on the authors of handbooks of antiquity and of histories of ancient religion. Even those who have centered their studies on the Isiac religion have tended to point out its apparent connections with the demi-monde. One scholar has recently suggested that the Isis religion would not have been so popular in Rome had it not corresponded to a "conception of love-life resulting from a natural evolution of Roman customs."[1] Ilse Becher, in a recent attempt to test the validity of these reproaches of immorality and to ask to what extent the charges corresponded to actual facts, has specifically mentioned a great number of handbooks of antiquity and works on ancient religion that have preserved these charges as reflections of true circumstances.[2] Failing to place the state-

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[1] P. Grimal, *Love in Ancient Rome* (trans. Arthur Train, Jr.; New York 1967) xii-xiii. Grimal further says (p. 148), "Isis had no more fervent and meticulous devotees than 'loose women'."

[2] I. Becher, "Der Isiskult in Rom—ein Kult der Halbwelt?" *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskund* 96 (1970) 81-90. Among the works mentioned by Becher as charging the cult with immorality are : J. Marquardt, *Römische Staatsverwaltung*, 3 (Leipzig 1885[2]) 78; C. Reichel, *De Isidis apud Romanos cultu* (Diss. Berlin 1849) 29 f.; O. Seeck, *Hermes* 43 (1908) 643; S. B. Platner and T. Ashby, *A Topographical Dictionary* 283; L. Friedlaender, *Darstellungen aus der Sittengeschichte Roms* 1 (Leipzig 1919[9]) 301; A. Erman, *Die Religion der Ägypter* (Berlin/Leizpig 1934) 422; Roeder, *RE* 1.2416, 9.2104; F. Cumont, *Die orientalischen Religionen im römischen Heidentum* (Stuttgart 1959[4]) 84; G. Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus* 243 n. 61; P. T. Tschudin, *Isis in Rom* (Basel 1958, unabridged version) 145, 26; A. D. Nock, *The Cambridge Ancient History* 10 (Cambridge 1934) 504; *id.*, *Conversion* 124;

ments of the elegiac poets, Martial, Juvenal, and the historian Josephus into their proper perspective, and using the aretalogies for their own purposes, these authors have in their accounts made sexual promiscuity the rule rather than the exception among the followers of Isis. Whereas Becher has shown that the Isiac religion was not a cult of the demi-monde, it is also possible to demonstrate that it had essentially a stringent morality and in ancient society was known for its purity rather than for the opposite. Though it would be naive to assume that no one of its priests, priestesses, other functionaries, or ordinary adherents was ever involved in immoral actions, as it would be naive to assume this of any religion, the purpose of this chapter is to show that the evidence pointing to its high sense of morality far outweighs that on the other side, thus illustrating that its interrelationship with Christianity can be better understood when its ethical content is put in its proper perspective.

It is not difficult to understand why the ancient authors and ancient society in general viewed the happenings at the Isis temple, particularly in Rome, with a great deal of suspicion. For one thing the pomp of the Isiac festivals was far removed from the perfunctory ceremonies honoring the Olympian gods. A good deal of emotion, to which the Roman temperament in particular was not accustomed, was involved in the religion. For another thing, because a sense of mystery surrounded the cult, the imaginations of those who were not initiates or adherents had room to

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R. Meyer, *Die Bedeutung Ägyptens in der lateinischen Literatur der vorchristlichen Zeit* (Diss. Zurich 1961) 186. Among those who warn us not to take these charges earnestly, she mentions Bonnet, *Reallexikon der ägyptischen Religionsgeschichte* (Berlin 1952) 331; H. Kirchner, *Die Bedeutung der Fremdkulte in der römischen Ostpolitik* (Diss. Bonn 1956) 144; Tschudin, *Isis in Rom* (Basel 1958, unabridged version) 145, 26. J. Bayet, *Histoire politique et psychologique de la religion Romaine* (Paris 1957) does not even mention the demi-monde in connection with the Isis cult. To this last category I would add Tran Tam Tinh, *Essai*, see esp. p. 117-18, and Malaise, *Les conditions de pénétration* 138-39 n. 6 : "La réputation de licence faite aux cultes isiaques était certainement un moyen de dénigrement non fondé que les Romains utilisèrent d'ailleurs aussi contre les Juifs et les Chrétiens." Witt, *Isis*, while he generally maintains a balance between moral and immoral elements, at one point (p. 138) states, "But for baser folk in the Italian capital the same temple could mean little else than a brothel." Vidman, *Isis und Sarapis* 105 mentions the women of the demi-monde as adherents of the cult.

conjecture about the activities at the temple. One can imagine the suspicions aroused by the practice of incubation whereby the adherent would hire a room in the temple spending the night there awaiting the appearance of one of the Egyptian gods in his dreams. Moreover, the fact that women in large numbers frequented the temple caused suspicion in the minds of the Romans who had not developed beyond the stage of thinking that women belonged only in the home. Since Isis was the self-proclaimed leader of the movement for the emancipation of women, having given women power equal to that of men, the looser sense of morality that arose within society as a whole was ascribed by some to the goddess.[3] Whether it was for these reasons that the Roman poets added the element of license in the cult to their poems or whether these allusions are based on actual facts cannot, of course, be stated with absolute certainty, but it is of interest to note that most of the allegations against the cult were made within a concentrated period of time either by the elegiac poets or the satirists.

Those who speak of the Isiac religion as basically immoral usually cite the elegiac poets, Martial, Juvenal, and Josephus as evidence for this fact. While Ovid supplies the greatest number of references, Catullus seems to have made the initial implication that the cult of the Egyptian gods had among its followers those of easy virtue. In the midst of a flirtation with Varus's mistress, Catullus boasts that he has returned from his praetorship in Bithynia in possession of chair bearers. Testing him, the lady demanded the use of the slaves, saying :

> ... commodum enim volo ad Sarapim
> deferri
>
> (10.26-27)

What Varus's mistress had in mind to do upon her arrival at the temple cannot, of course, be determined. All that can be said is that the lady was of no strict moral convictions and was somehow involved with the cult of Isis and Sarapis. Likewise, Propertius connected those of loose morals with Isis when, on the death of an old procuress, he scornfully imitated the advice she gave to women to entice their lovers. A day of abstinence, she said, would make the passion of love grow warmer, so

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[3] Becher, *ZAS* 96 (1970) 85-86.

denique ubi amplexu Venerem promiseris empto,
fac similes puros Isidis esse dies.

(4.5.33-34)

But it is Ovid to whom we must turn to discover more direct reproaches against the sanctuaries of Isis. Ovid viewed the temples of Isis primarily as places of seduction. In *Amores* 2.2.25-26, leaving room for conjecture, a lover advised the guardian of his girl friend :

nec tu, linigeram fieri quid possit ad Isim,
quaesieris ...

Furthermore, Ovid recommended the sanctuaries of Isis to young men as places where they might readily make the acquaintance of women :

nec fuge linigerae Memphitica templa iuvencae;
multas illa facit, quod fuit ipsa Iovi.

(*Ars* 1.77-78)

Women were given similar advice for meeting men :

visite turicremas vaccae Memphitidos aras.

(*Ars* 3.393)

Martial, too, mentioned the temples of Isis as places of temptation frequented by high society :

hic quoque deceptus Memphitica templa frequentat,
adsidet et cathedris, maesta iuvenca, tuis.

(2.14.7-8)

cur nec Pompeia lentus spatiatur in umbra
nec petit Inachidos limina? ne futuat.

(11.47.3-4)

Likewise, Juvenal pointed out the dangers of the Isiac temples and voiced his accusations :

... et properat iamque expectatur in hortis
aut aput Isiacae potius sacraria lenae.

(*Sat.* 6.488-89)

nuper enim, ut repeto, fanum Isidis et Ganymedem
Pacis et advectae secreta palatia matris
et Cererem (nam quo non prostat femina templo?)
notior Aufidio moechus celebrare solebas.

(*Sat.* 9.22-25)

The literary reference most ruinous to the reputation of the Isis cult, however, is the story told by Josephus (*Ant. iud.* 18.65-80) in which a knight, Decius Mundus, charmed by the beauty of a noble matron, Paulina, seduced her, aided by a woman friend of his who bribed the priests of Isis. Appearing in the temple in the guise of Anubis, Mundus had intercourse with Paulina who deemed it a great honor to be so summoned by the god. When news of the deceit reached the emperor Tiberius, the temple priests were crucified along with the woman who had conspired with them. The temple of Isis was destroyed, and the statue of Isis was thrown into the Tiber. The lighter punishment of exile was imposed on Mundus because his was a crime motivated by passion. In addition, four thousand freedmen devoted to the Egyptian or Jewish beliefs were exiled to Sardinia; others were ordered to depart from Italy unless they gave up their beliefs before a certain day.

As has been correctly pointed out by Becher,[4] the passages from the poets are always taken out of context by those who argue for the immorality of the cult. Put back into the framework of the poems from which they come, the passages lead to two important observations. 1) The charge of immorality leveled against the Isis temples is also made against the temples of other gods and against all public gathering places. Juvenal, for example, in one of the passages given (*Sat.* 9.22-25) assailed the temple of Isis in the same breath as he did the temple of the Great Mother and of Ceres, asking finally in what temple women did not prostitute themselves. His accusations, then, seem to result from his belief that wherever women gathered evil ensued. They need not have a basis in actual fact. A certain skepticism about the reliability of Juvenal's sources is, in any case, warranted.

> In slander-loving Rome, where the follies and sins of women were the principal subject of amusement, the bare truth was not always sufficiently piquant. Juvenal was only too readily disposed to believe, of the women as well as of the men of the haughty and exclusive aristocracy, all that class-hatred and love of scandal might invent to their injury. He described secret orgies of both sexes as minutely as if he had been a spectator at them. In these and similar cases, he must have drawn from very muddy sources, and it is highly questionable whether the information which he followed had really any more substantial basis than the tales of 'Oedipus-

[4] *Ibid.*, 84-85, 87-88.

> unions and Thyestes-feasts' at the meetings of the Christians for worship, which for centuries were believed to be true."[5]

Likewise, Ovid (*Ars* 3.633-37) implicated the theater,[6] the circus, and the temple of Bona Dea along with the Isis temple, and even went so far as to include the porticos of Pompey, Octavia, and Livia, and the portico of the Danaids in the temple of Apollo on the Palatine Hill among the places where young men might make the acquaintance of women, along with the temples of Venus and of the Jews and even the law courts.[7] In the face of such evidence there are two alternatives: either all of the temples and buildings in Rome at the time of Augustus were houses of sin, or the poets had distorted existing facts, namely the possibility of making acquaintances in temples and public buildings, so that, neglecting the seriousness of the cult in the temple, they shaped the possible moral risks to correspond to their poetic needs.[8] This second possibility seems more probable. It would be unjust to attribute more moral offenses to the Isis cult than to Roman society and its institutions as a whole.

2) The second observation made of these passages when put into context is that the same poets who speak of immorality in the cult are also responsible for calling attention to the rules of chastity observed by Isiac devotees. It is the constant complaints of the elegists that their mistresses were observing ten days of sexual abstinence in honor of Isis which reveal the purity involved in the religion. Tibullus's Delia had observed the days of chastity,[9] and so had Propertius's Cynthia. [10]

[5] J. R. C. Martyn, tr., *Friedlander's Essays on Juvenal* (Amsterdam 1969) 23-24.

[6] For the dangers of the theatre see also Ov., *Am.* 2.2.26.

[7] Ov., *Ars* 1.67-68.

[8] Becher, *ZAS* 96 (1970) 88.

[9] Tib. 1.3.25-26 :

> ... pureque lavari
> te (memini) et puro secubuisse toro.

[10] Prop. 2.33.2 :

> Cynthia iam noctes est operata decem.

See also 2.33.17 :

> quidve tibi prodest viduas dormire puellas?

2.28.62 :

> votivas noctes et mihi solve decem.

4.5.34 :

> fac simulas puros Isidis esse dies.

In fact, Propertius complained that Isis was a bitter goddess because she so often kept ardent lovers apart (2.33.5-6). For Ovid, likewise, Isis signified an empty bed on certain nights.[11] Even Juvenal, while mocking the gifts by which Osiris would be appeased, spoke of the pardon that had to be sought when a wife did not abstain from intercourse on the sacred days.

The truth of the Paulina story related by Josephus has been questioned[12] both because of its intrinsic nature and because of references from other ancient authors. About the story itself two things may be pointed to as evidence of fabrication. First of all, the gullibility of Paulina was surpassed only by that of her husband who, knowing full well her intentions of having intercourse with Anubis, allowed her to go to the temple of Isis that night.[13] The foolishness of both husband and wife is scarcely credible. The story is very reminiscent of the legend of the Egyptian magician Nectanebos who, by means of a similar deceit in which he pretended to be a god, raped Olympias, the mother of Alexander

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[11] Ov., *Am.* 1.8.73-74 :

saepe nega noctes. Capitis modo finge dolorem,
et modo, quae causas praebeat, Isis erit.

Am. 3.9.33-34 :

Quid vos sacra iuvant? quid nunc Aegyptia prosunt
sistra? quid in vacuo secubuisse toro?

[12] Lafaye, *Histoire du culte* 53-55; Nock, *Conversion* 153, "The story may contain invention, and it certainly sounds like Dr. Achilli's revelations on the inner conduct of the Catholic Church, but the persecution is certain." R. M. Grant, *The Sword and the Cross* (New York 1955) 28-29; *id.*, *Miracle and Natural Law in Graeco-Roman and Early Christian Thought* (Amsterdam 1957) 177; H. R. Moehring, "The Persecution of the Jews and the Adherents of the Isis Cult at Rome, A.D. 19," *Novum Testamentum* 3 (1959) 298, 302-304; C. Pharr, "The Testimony of Josephus to Christianity," *AJP* 48 (1927) 144. J. Leipoldt in a review of R. Merkelbach's *Roman und Mysterium in der Antike* in *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 89 (1964) 16 says of the Paulina story, "das ist eine wandernde Geschichte, die, wenn sie einen besonderen Sinn hat, etwa ein Beispiel für Priesterbetrug sein soll." Malaise, *Les conditions de pénétration* 88 calls the Paulina incident "l'histoire, grotesque et en grande partie inventée... Sans doute, dans ce récit destiné à expliquer les persécutions infligées par Tibère aux Isiaques, le seul détail véridique est-il le début d'une participation ouverte de matrones au culte isiaque." What is worthy of notice for Malaise is the fact that Paulina was of high origin.

[13] Lafaye, *Histoire du culte* 53.

the Great.[14] Secondly, the punishment dealt to Mundus and the reason given for its lack of severity were hardly in harmony either with the punishments given the other conspirators or with the general policies of Tiberius.[15] Moreover, two other authors, Tacitus (*Ann.* 2.85.5) and Suetonius (*Tib.* 36), gave accounts of Tiberius's banishment of Egyptians and Jews in 19 A.D.[16] without mentioning the Paulina incident (and the Fulvia incident that Josephus relates immediately afterward) as the cause of this exile. It is strange that Tacitus who delighted to tell of the scandals at Rome should pass over such an incident as this. The entire story resembles a Hellenistic romance in some of its particulars. The sparing of one accused of a crime of passion, for example, reflects a view fairly common in the Hellenistic romance.[17] Moreover, the account has an apologetic tone to it by which Josephus seems to have intended to draw a distinction between the oriental and Judaic religions which were often confused by Roman authorities. Josephus, by contrasting the stories of Paulina and Fulvia,[18] indicated that the punishment dealt to the Jews was wholesale persecution, while the Isis adherents were punished in accordance with the law. The Hellenistic novel had become a tool for and was perhaps motivated by apologetics for a cult and its votaries.[19] Here the propaganda was leveled against the Isis cult as a defense of Judaism.[20] Though it cannot be proved with certainty that

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[14] Grant, *Sword and Cross* 29; M. Pieper, "Nektanebos," *RE* 16.2239. See also O. Weinreich, *Der Trug des Nektanebos* (Leipzig 1911) 27.

[15] Grant, *Sword and Cross* 29.

[16] All three authors were referring to the same incident although Josephus inserts the story into his account of the procuratorship of Pontius Pilate, dating it about 30 A.D. (E. M. Smallwood, "Some Notes on the Jews under Tiberius," *Latomus* 15 [1956] 314-15.) Pharr (*AJP* 48 [1927] 143-45) believes that the insertion of the Paulina story outside of chronological sequence was intentional. Immediately preceding this story is an account of Jesus. By following this account with the sentence, *καὶ ὑπὸ τοὺς αὐτοὺς χρόνους ἕτερόν τι δεινὸν ἐθορύβει τοὺς Ἰουδαίους*, Josephus infers that Jesus was responsible somehow for an uproar among the Jews. By means of the Paulina story, says Pharr, Josephus probably intended to deny the Christian account of the virgin birth and the divinity of Christ. The caption of the whole section might be, according to Pharr, "The Three Gullible Women", i.e. Mary, Paulina, and Fulvia.

[17] Grant, *Sword and Cross* 29.

[18] Moehring, *Novum Testamentum* 3 (1959) 301-302.

[19] M. Hadas, *Three Greek Romances* (New York 1953) 8.

[20] Moehring, *Novum Testamentum* 3 (1959) 304.

the Paulina story is mere fabrication, it is evident that a great deal of caution is necessary in basing any allegations on it.

Aside from a certain hesitation about the reliability of references to the immorality of the cult, from a positive point of view, there is a considerable amount of literary and inscriptional evidence for believing that far from being a cult associated with sex, the Isiac religion was known for its ascetism. Herodotus, in fact, proclaimed that it was the Egyptians who first deemed it a matter of religious observance not to have intercourse with women in temples and not to enter a temple after intercourse without washing. In this and all other matters, observed the historian, the Egyptians were very strict in opposing any sort of desecration of their temples.[21] The Egyptians apparently recognized the existing dangers of the temples, however, as an inscription of the Hellenistic period from the temple in Edfu demonstrates. Therein priests were warned to maintain a certain reserve in the face of women devotees.[22] Calasiris, the priest of Isis in Heliodorus's *Aethiopica*, nearly succumbed to temptation in the temple due to the beauty and charm of a Thracian devotee who frequented the temple. Weak though his will was, the gods preserved him from committing the act, but the sin, he felt, was no less real since his intent had been evil. He had no choice but to impose exile on himself.[23]

A strict adherence, then, to certain rules of abstinence was an essential part of the cult. Sexual abstinence was imposed not only on women, whose "pure days" are learned of from the elegiac poets and Juvenal, but also on men, at least on male priests. It would be logical that ordinary male devotees should observe the same rules of chastity as a female devotee, but it is impossible to find any concrete proof for this, except for the very general prescription of chastity mentioned in an inscription from Delos.[24] In fact, Juvenal gives us a somewhat different picture when he speaks of the wife who did not observe the precepts of

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[21] Hdt. 2.64 : *καὶ τὸ μὴ μίσγεσθαι γυναιξὶ ἐν ἱροῖσι μηδὲ ἀλούτους ἀπὸ γυναικῶν ἐς ἱρὰ ἐσιέναι οὗτοι εἰσὶ οἱ πρῶτοι θρησκεύσαντες ... Αἰγύπτιοι δὲ θρησκεύουσι περισσῶς τά τε ἄλλα περὶ τὰ ἱρὰ καὶ δὴ καὶ τάδε.*

[22] Becher, *ZAS* 96 (1970) 84.

[23] Hld., *Aeth.* 2.25.1-6.

[24] See *infra* p. 122.

chastity on the sacred days.[25] It is her husband who seeks pardon for her with his tears and sacrifices. But he asks no pardon for himself. Are we to assume that for the husband, who shows evidence of involvement in the Egyptian religion, there were no "pure days"? Or was it not he but another man who was his wife's partner? To be sure, Lucius in Apuleius's *Metamorphoses* underwent periods of continence previous to his various consecrations to the Egyptian gods, but, as has been noted, there was a very limited number of initiates, and these initiates ranked in the priestly class of devotees. An inscription from Ostia gives the only epigraphical evidence in which a particular man connected with the cult of Isis is singled out for his chastity, and he, too, is a *sacerdos sanctae reginae* and an *Anubiacus*.[26] As to the ordinary male devotee, the matter remains uncertain.

That the ascetic ways of those consecrated to Isis were difficult to keep we learn from Lucius.[27] Following the procession down to the sea, Lucius, realizing that he had been set apart for the service of the goddess, hired for himself a room within the inner chambers of the temple. Each night Isis appeared to him, urging him to take the order of her religion. Desirous though he was to follow her command, Lucius was held back by fear, for he had learned by inquiry that the obedience required was hard and the chastity difficult; in fact, the whole religious life was strict, and, since it was subject to so many temptations, had to be guarded very carefully. All of this abstention, according to Plutarch, was of great value as a preparation for the sacred rites :

> *θειώσεως σώφρονι μὲν ἐνδελεχῶς διαίτῃ καὶ βρωμάτων πολλῶν καὶ ἀφροδισίων ἀποχαῖς κολουούσης τὸ ἀκόλαστον καὶ φιλήδονον, ἀθρύπτους δὲ καὶ στερρὰς ἐν ἱεροῖς λατρείας ἐθιζούσης ὑπομένειν...*[28]

The inscriptions in several instances refer to the chastity of the adherents, usually female, of the Isis cult.[29] We hear, in fact, in two cases

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[25] Juv., *Sat.* 6.535-41.

[26] VS 536=CIL 14.352.

[27] Apul., *Met.* 11.19.

[28] Plu., *DIO* 2 (351F-352A).

[29] From Rome comes a series of short inscriptions (VS 390) set up by a college of

of virgins associated with the cult. In an inscription from Rome[30] a certain tomb is said to hold the bones of Volumnia, an Isiac. We are told in the last line of the inscription that Volumnia was an unmarried virgin. From Cirta in Numidia comes an altar dedicated to a certain Julia Sidonia Felix, a virgin.[31] She too held a priestly office in the cult :

Memphidos haec fuerat divae sistrata(e) sacerdos.

Most interesting among the inscriptions that mention the purity of the cult is one that appears on the base of a statue of a man reclining with a goblet in his hand :[32]

Tibur mihi patria, Agricola sum vocitatus,
Flavius idem, ego sum discumbens, ut me videtis.
Sic et aput (*sic*) superos annis, quibus fata dedere,
animulam colui nec defuit umqua (*sic*) Lyaeus.
Praecessitque prior Primitiva gratissima coniuncxs,
Flavia et ipsa, cultrix deae Phariaes casta
sedulaque et forma decore repleta,
cum qua ter denos dulcissimos egerim annos.
Solaciumque sui generis Aurelium Primitivum
tradidit, qui pietate sua coleret fastigia nostra,
hospitiumque mihi secura servavit in aevum.

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initiates of Isis on the Aventine Hill on an incline facing the Tiber. The great number of servile names indicates that the initiates were of a modest condition in life. The inscriptions, many of them direct invocations to Isis, were accompanied by a series of graffiti. According to F. Cumont, "Rapport sur une mission à Rome," *CRAI* (1945) 398, these graffiti are of an obscene character and prove the existence of intimate relations among the young slaves of the brotherhood. Cumont believes that "it confirms what we already know, that the complacent morals of the Egyptian goddess were indulgent to sins of the flesh." R. P. Darsy studied these inscriptions and was able to read some graffiti which had remained obscure up to that point. They have been published by him in *Recherches archéologiques à Saint-Sabine* (Rome 1968)= *Monumenti dell'Antichità cristiana*, pubblicati a cura del Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, II[e] série, IX, p. 30-45. In fact, the obscene graffiti have nothing to do with the Isiac cults. (Cf. Malaise, *Inventaire* Roma 103, p. 142).

Müller, *Der Isiskult im antiken Beneventum* 25, speaks of the orgiastic dances of male and female Isis worshipers as represented on the band of a marble relief of the Hadrianic period found in Ariccia on the Via Appia.

[30] VS 450a=CIL 6.36589.

[31] VS 789.

[32] VS 451=CIL 6.17985.

> Amici, qui legitis, moneo, miscete Lyaeum
> et potate procul redimiti tempora flore
> et Venereos coitus formosis ne denegate puellis :
> cetera post obitum terra consumit et ignis.

Agricola Flavius was obviously no stranger to the pleasures of life, yet in the midst of these pleasures he must have been willing to endure the rules of chastity that his wife observed for Isis. It is as a chaste and diligent devotee of Isis that he memorializes her. His words of advice to the reader, while mentioning the delights of love unions with beautiful girls, do not specify the places where the girls were to be found. He himself, familiar with the chastity practised by his wife, would no doubt avoid the temple of Isis for this purpose.

The rules of chastity in a very general way appear in an inscription from Delos.[33] After a dedication to *θεῶι Μεγάλωι* (Sarapis perhaps) *καὶ Διὶ Κασίωι καὶ Ταχνήψει* (Isis of Mt. Casius) the following prescription appears :

γυναῖκα μὴ προσάγειν μηδὲ ἐν ἐρεοῖς ἄνδρα.

Those who had observed such prescriptions were frequently honored in the inscriptions. In Chaeronea the boeotarch and high priest set up a funerary dedication to his mother, Flavia Lanica, who was designated among other things as "a most chaste hieraphor of holy Isis, priestess throughout life of Taposiris Isis."[34] An inscription from Rome on a marble sarcophagus mentions another priestess of Isis, this time a pastophor, Alexandria by name, who was *usque pudica*.[35] Furthermore, in the Greek verses that follow this Latin inscription, Isis herself is called chaste (*θεᾶς Νειλώτιδος Εἴσιδος ἁγνῆς*). From Ostia comes the inscription mentioned above in which a male priest of Isis who was also an *Anubiacus* was remembered for his *sanctimonia castitasque*.[36] In another inscription from Ostia a certain Cornelius Victorinus, an Isiac, and his wife set up an inscription to their daughter, "a most chaste and religious"

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[33] VS CE 16. Cf. VS CE 506=IG 11.4.1300 where part of a sacred law appears : *Ἀπ' οἴνου μὴ προσιέναι μηδὲ ἐν ἀνθινοῖς.*

[34] VS 62.

[35] VS 433=IG 14.1366 and IGRR 1.187.

[36] VS 536=CIL 14.352.

girl.[37] There is, however, in this case no way to ascertain the religious affiliation of the daughter. A more definite reference is made in the case of the sarcophagus of Ravenna[38] dedicated by C. Sosius Julianus to his wife and daughter. The inscription on the front is made to the daughter and to *Tetratiae Isiadi, coiugi castissimae.* Again on the back precisely the same words are used in the dedication. On the front in relief a man sits on a chair holding a book on which appears the inscription :

Parca coniugem bonam rapuit invito viro.

Tetratia Isis who was an initiate of the Egyptian gods was, then, a most chaste and good wife, an example of an ideal devotee of Isis.

While women who have no connection with the Egyptian gods are frequently called chaste in the inscriptions, it is nonetheless notable from the instances in which the purity of Isiacs is mentioned that membership in the community of Isis followers did not prevent one from being chaste, as some scholars would have us believe. Indeed, as has been illustrated, a certain degree of purity was required of Isiacs. It does not seem probable that the lower- and middle-class citizens who were responsible for setting up the majority of sepulchral inscriptions would frequent temples that were merely houses of sin. Most especially would virgins and chaste priestesses have avoided the temples if the dangers there far outweighed the benefits.

In striking contrast to the literature of the early empire in which the temples of Isis were depicted as places frequented by those of loose morals, the literature of the later empire and of the Christian fathers lauds the chastity of Isis and her followers. The Hellenistic romances, for example, portrayed Isis as the protectress of the chastity of lovers during periods of separation. Sometimes a female infant was dedicated to Isis for the protection of her virginity before marriage. Marriage vows were made with Isis as witness. Women fled to the temple to seek out protection from Isis, without fear of being violated.

That the Christian fathers only rarely had harsh words for the morality of the Egyptian gods and their adherents is surprising. If a loose sense of morality were, in fact, characteristic of the Isiac cult, one would

[37] VS 539=CIL 14.343.

[38] VS 586=ILS 9442 except for the Greek song.

expect severe criticism from the ancient Christian writers. Such criticism would in any case be expected, if only after the example of the classical writers. Instances of condemnation of the religion among the Christian writers, however, are few. Only two complaints are made directly against Isis on the basis of immorality. The late fourth century Greek author Epiphanius censured Isis on the grounds that her love for and marriage to her brother gave divine sanction to incestuous brother-sister marriages among her adherents. Moreover, following the charge that Isis's son Horus was never able to know for certain who his father was, Epiphanius makes the statement that the goddess herself had spent ten years as a prostitute in the city of Tyre.[39] There is no indication that the story of her prostitution in Tyre had its origin in the Egyptian folk myths surrounding the Osirian group of gods. The story perhaps began circulating at Rome under the influence of certain authors, although there is no other mention of it, or was conceived by Epiphanius because of similar occurrences in other religions.[40] Dunand would explain this by the assimilation of Isis to Astarte and by the practice in Syrian sanctuaries of sacred prostitution, noting that in any case it is a story which is very foreign to the Egyptian legend.[41] That Epiphanius was somewhat misinformed as to the Osirian myth is evident from the fact that he

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[39] Epiph., *Anc.* 104 (=PG 43.206B-208A) : *Αἰσχυνέσθωσαν δὲ οἱ ταύτης προσκυνηταὶ (καὶ ἀφρογενεῖς), τὰς ἑαυτῶν θυγατέρος τε καὶ γυναῖκας καὶ ἀδελφὰς, τῶν θεῶν αὐτῶν πράξεις μιμεῖσθαι παραινοῦντες, καὶ εὐθὺς μὲν ὡς ἱερέως ἐρῶσαι τοῦ ἰδίου αὐτῶν ἀδελφοῦ Τύφωνος, τοὺς ἄλλους κατὰ τῶν ἰδίων ἀδελφῶν στρατεύουσι. Πολλὴ δὲ αἰσχύνη θεᾶς τῆς μήτε αἰσχύνην ἰδίου ἀδελφοῦ αἰθομένης ἀλλ' ἐρώσης μὲν, καὶ μὴ ἀρχουμένης τοῖς ἔξωθεν ἀνδράσιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἕως τοῦ ἰδίου ἀδελφοῦ θανούσης : οὐ μόνον δὲ ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀδελφοκτονίαν διὰ τὴν ἰδίαν τῆς ἐπιθυμίας ἀκορεστίαν τοῖς φιλτάτοις ὑποδείκνυσι. Καὶ Ὧρος μὲν ἕνα γεννᾷ παῖδα, ᾧ οὐκ ἠδυνήθη παραστῆσαί τις, εἰ γνήσιος ἀληθῶς ἐστιν αὐτοῦ πατήρ · ἢ ἂν μὲν Τύφωνα τιμήσῃ, διστάζει, μὴ οὐκ ἔστιν αὐτοῦ γονεύς εἰ δὲ τὸν Ὄσιριν, τίς οὕτω τὴν ἀκρίθειαν παραστή σειε · καλὸν δὲ θεὸν ἡ τοιαύτη μήτηρ ἐδίδασκε παραλαθοῦσα αὐτὸν, καὶ ἐν Τύρῳ πορνεύσασα ἔτη δέκα !*

[40] F. Zimmermann, *Die ägyptische Religion nach der Darstellung der Kirchenschriftsteller und die ägyptischen Denkmaler* (Paderborn 1912) 51. Merkelbach, *Roman und Mysterium* 167, suggests that Epiphanius could not have drawn this idea entirely from the air. In his holy zeal, says Merkelbach, Epiphanius concealed the fact that Isis yielded her honor in a bordello. "In der Polemik gegen die feindliche Religion nahmen es damals weder Christen noch Heiden mit der Wahrheit sehr genau, und hier bestand die Verdrehung der Wahrheit nur im Weglassen."

[41] Dunand, *Le culte d'Isis* 3.132. See also H. Seyrig in *Syria* 49 (1972) 97 ff.

made Typhon rather than Osiris the brother-lover of Isis.[42] His sources, then, were confused at least on his one point, and possibly also in the matter of the tale of her prostitution.

Cyril of Alexandria viewed the Egyptian adherents of Isis with disdain to the point of equating initiation in the cult with wantonness. "It is the custom of the Egyptians," he says, "especially for the women, to visit temples wearing linen garments, reverently supplying their left hands with a mirror and their right with a sistrum; these women, when they have been chosen among others and have been made initiates of such a religion with difficulty, are deemed worthy of honor—therefore of wantonness. For so it is better to speak the truth."[43]

Aside from a passage in which Tertullian referred to Anubis as an adulterer,[44] these are the only two examples of charges of immorality made against the Isis cult by the Christian fathers. Far from chastising the adherents of the cult, Lactantius, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian singled out the Egyptian gods and their devotees as examples of chaste individuals. Lactantius, for instance, spoke of the veneration accorded by individual peoples to the founders of their cities, whether these founders were "men notable for their bravery or women remarkable for their chastity; so Egypt worshiped Isis with the greatest veneration."[45] Clement of Alexandria praised the Egyptians for the purity of their lives as compared with the Greeks. "For although the Egyptians worshiped beasts, at least they were not adulterous or immodest, nor did they seek out any pleasures contrary to nature. As for the Greeks what need was there to say what they were; enough has been said of them already."[46]

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[42] Cf. Firm. Mat., *Err. prof. rel.* 2.1-2, 6-7, who also made Typhon the husband of Isis, and consequently accused Isis and Typhon of incestuous-adulterous relations.

[43] Cyr. Alex., *Ador.* 9 : *ἔθος Αἰγυπτίων μάλιστα γυναιξὶν εἰσφοιτᾶν ἱεροῖς λινῇ μὲν ἐσθῆτι κατεσταλμέναις, κατόπτρῳ δὲ τὴν ἀριστερὰν καὶ σείστρῳ τὴν δεξιὰν ἱεροπρεπῶς κατεστεμμέναις, αἳ ὅτε μάλιστα τῶν ἄλλων ἐξειλεγμέναι καὶ ἱερομύστιδες τῆς τοιαύτης μόλις ἠξιοῦντο τιμῆς—ὕβρεως μὲν οὖν · ὧδε γὰρ ἀμεινόν τε καὶ ἀληθὲς εἰπειν.—*

[44] Tert., *Apol.* 15.1 : ... utrum mimos an deos vestros in iocis et strophis rideatis : moechum Anubin ...

[45] Lact., *Div. inst.* 1.15 : ... singuli populi gentis aut urbis suae conditores, seu viri fortitudine insignes erant seu feminae castitate mirabiles, summa veneratione coluerunt ut Aegyptus Isidem ...

[46] Clem. Alex., *Protr.* 2.39.4 : *Καὶ πόσῳ βελτίους Αἰγύπτιοι κωμηδὸν καὶ κατὰ πόλεις*

Mention of the chastity of the cult by Tertullian revealed a deeper degree of abstinence practised by adherents than was previously known from literature. While pointing out reasons why Christians should not shrink from certain forms of abstinence, especially chastity, Tertullian pointed to certain women who were servants of Isis, or in his words, African Ceres. "Widows" he called them, because even while their husbands were still alive, these women would separate from them and even introduce new wives in their place. Such women shunned all contact with men, even to the point of avoiding the kisses of their own sons. This was a difficult observance, "nevertheless, by enduring usage they persevered in such a discipline of widowhood," said Tertullian, "which excluded even the solaces of sacred piety."[47] Tertullian evidently considered the chastity of the devotees, of the goddess herself, and of the priests of the Apis bull quite remarkable for in several other instances he held it up as an example for Christians.[48] If pagans could be so stringent in observing these deprivations of pleasure, then surely Christians inspired by true faith could do the same.

It is evident, then, that certain possibilities for immoral actions did exist within the confines of the temple of Isis. Both the followers of Isis and those not connected with the cult were aware of the possibilities. Surely advantage was taken of these opportunities in several instances. It would be wrong to assume that all of the priests were as capable as Calasiris was in repressing their desires to give in to temptation, or that everyone who frequented the temples of Isis was absolutely restrained in his desires or actions. It would be just as wrong, however, to assume that opportunity for an action necessarily resulted in that action. It is particularly important to avoid this fallacy in the face of the great amount of evidence for chastity in the cult. The religion was not a cult of the demi-monde, nor was sexual freedom a characteristic of the cult. Too

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τὰ ἄλογα τῶν ζῴων ἐκ τετιμηκότες ἥπερ Ἕλληνες τοιούτους προσκυνοῦντες θεούς; Τὰ μὲν γὰρ εἰ καὶ θηρία, ἀλλ' οὐ μοιχικά, ἀλλ' οὐ μάχλα, παρὰ φύσιν δὲ θηρεύει ἡδονὴν οὐδὲ ἕν. Οἳ δὲ ὁποῖοι, τί καὶ χρὴ λέγειν ἔτι, ἀποχρώντως αὐτῶν διεληλεγμένων;

[47] Tert., *Ad uxor.* 1.6 : viduas Africanae Cereri adsistere scimus durissima quidem oblivione a matrimonio allectas. Nam manentibus in vita viris non modo decedunt, sed et alias eis utique ridentibus loco suo insinuant, adempto omni contactu usque ad osculum filiorum et tamen durante usu perseverant in tali viduitatis disciplina, quae pietatis etiam sanctae solatia excludit.

[48] Tert., *Castit.* 13; *Monog.* 17; *Ieiun.* 16.

much has been made of the accusations of Ovid and of Juvenal, and too much attention has been given to Cynthia and Delia and Corinna as the typical devotees of Isis. The morality of the cult should be considered from a more positive point of view than it has been in the past for, as Tran Tam Tinh emphasizes, "la religion isiaque possédait une morale plus pure, plus élevée que la religion classique romaine ... Si tous les isiaques ne se rasaient pas complètement la tête sans voiler ni protéger leur calvitie, mais l'exposaient à tous les regards comme le Lucius d'Apulee, ils vivaient une vie si austère et si ascétique que Tertullien les prit comme exemples pour exhorter les chrétiens a s'élever au-dessus d'eux par une vie plus pure, plus chaste. Au lieu des manifestations orgiaques ou de jeux brutaux, ils observaient des périodes de continence et d'abstinence charnelle, de purifications et d'épreuves pénitentielles."[49]

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[49] Tran Tam Tinh, *Essai* 117-18.

CONCLUSIONS

In recent years a great deal of attention has been paid to the cults of Isis and Sarapis with the result that, although in many areas, such as the composition of Egyptian and Greek elements in the cult, little more is known than ever was, better organization of the available material has lessened the tendency to make sweeping generalizations about the cults. Conclusions made about Isis in recent years seem to be more solidly based on concrete evidence, particularly on inscriptions and archaeological finds. Now, when most scholars favor the view that Sarapis was created by Ptolemy I from the Memphian Apis bull, Vidman, on the basis of a newly-discovered inscription, has urged that more attention be given to the theory that Sarapis existed already in the time of Alexander the Great. This certainly will pave the way for new scholarship. The theories that Sarapis was created for purposes of racial union and that the new god was deliberately promoted by the Ptolemies in territories outside of Egypt have been proven incorrect. Also shown to be untrue is the belief that Agathocles brought the Egyptian cults to Sicily about the year 300 B.C. It was not until the late third century B.C. that evidence for the cults began to appear there. While the cults spread with little opposition in Greece and in most parts of the Latin world, in Rome they became political issues and came into favor or disfavor as influential persons desired, and were a constant source of tension between the lower classes and the authorities, particularly during the first century B.C. After that time Isis became increasingly popular in Italy, and her cult spread into the Latin provinces though it was less deeply rooted there than in Italy.

Although Isis was gradually attributed with power over more and more spheres of life, those activities with which she was connected in her myth and in the aretalogies—birth, marriage, and death—were always associated with her. These activities, of course, were of particular interest to women, as inscriptions, literature, and archaeological finds from the Graeco-Roman world illustrate. There is also evidence that Isis was especially worshiped as a domestic goddess and therefore gained the devotion of whole families.

Of greatest interest in regard to the involvement of women in the cult of Isis is the extent to which they were involved. The inscriptions indicate that claims that women were responsible for the great popularity of the cult are false, as is also the belief that women provided the initial momentum in the early period of the cult's spread. Only 18.2% of the inscriptions mention women who were priestesses, members of cult associations, or ordinary devotees of the Egyptian cults. In certain large cult centers, namely Athens and Rome, female devotees were considerably more numerous but even there did not comprise more than half of all devotees.

The evidence from Pompeii suggests that a discrepancy exists between the inscriptions and the anepigraphic monuments as to the number of female adherents. The lack of organized catalogues of the archaeological finds makes it impossible to test whether such discrepancies exist in other locations.

The greatest number of inscriptions in which female adherents of the cult are mentioned date between the second century B.C. and the second century A.D. No Isis priestesses appeared before the imperial times. Instances of priestesses of Sarapis were nearly non-existent. These facts combined with evidence that a greater number of priestesses existed in the Roman than the Greek sphere indicate that the number of Isis priestesses grew in proportion to the increasing popularity of the goddess over her consort Sarapis.

While several women were members of the higher priesthood of the Egyptian gods, they filled very few of the highest ranking positions in the hierarchy. No woman, for instance, is mentioned or portrayed as the chief priest of a temple. Only one position in the higher priesthood, that of stolist, is expressly mentioned as having been filled by a woman. Reliefs, statues, and wall paintings depict Isis priestesses performing important functions in ceremonies and processions, but in most instances we are merely left to guess at the titles they held.

At least one office in the organization was filled only by women, namely that of canephor whose only known function was the carrying of baskets in Isiac processions. This was an office of the secondary priesthood in which women also participated in various other ways, most commonly in the carrying of cult objects in the processions.

The Isiac cult had a strong laity made possible by the union of devotees

into cult associations. Women were at times mentioned as members of these societies, most notably in a third-century B.C. Athenian inscription in which a woman was named as head of the *Sarapiastai.* In other instances female navarchs are listed along side male navarchs in a catalogue, and women were members of the colleges of *therapeutai* and *dekadistai.* In the Latin inscriptions are found female melanephors, *Isiacae,* and a certain type of devotee called simply *sacrorum* or *Isidis sacrorum.*

Women were also known to have been made initiates of Isis; this involved them in the highest class of devotees. But while men underwent the initiation process already in the first and second centuries A.D., the inscriptions do not mention women initiates until the third and fourth centuries A.D. Plutarch and Apuleius, however, were familiar with female initiates.

Women in the cult of Isis have nearly always in the past been accused of sexual immorality, and the cult has always been considered a cult of the demi-monde. These accusations have arisen from passages in the works of certain authors, namely Catullus, the elegiac poets, Juvenal, and Josephus. These passages, however, are frequently taken out of context. When they are considered in their original contexts, it is evident that the Isis temples were only one of many places assailed for contributing to moral laxity.

There is a considerable amount of literary and epigraphic evidence which illustrates that far from being a cult of the demi-monde, the religion was known for its asceticism. Rules of chastity existed for priests and for ordinary devotees, and the chastity of female adherents is noted in the inscriptions and in literature. It is noteworthy also that ancient and Christian writers praised the chastity of Isis and her followers. The early Christian writers would certainly have denounced the sexual immorality of the Isiac cult if, in fact, this were a characteristic of the cult. While it is incorrect to assume that absolutely no sexual transgressions occured in the environment of the Isis temples, it is just as wrong to view the cult as sexually corrupt.

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